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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 30 JULY 2024 | TUESDAY | BENGALURU | 23 MUHARRAM, 1446 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 187 | Pages: 8

EAM rules out any role for 3rd party in China dispute

In a jibe at China, Quad says no nation should dominate others

TOKYO, 29 JULY

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday ruled out any role for a third party in India's border dispute with China, saying the two neighbours have an issue and it is for them to find a way out.

Jaishankar, who is here to attend a Quad foreign ministerial meeting, also said that India's relationship with China is not good and it's not doing well.

Also, in a loud and clear message to China, the Quad reaffirmed its steadfast commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific and resolved to work towards a region where no country dominates others and each state is free from "coercion" in all its forms.

Meanwhile, China accused the Quad nations, including the US and India, of "artificially creating tension" and "inciting confrontation" to "contain" the development of other countries in the Asia Pacific region.

The grouping comprising India, the US, Japan and Australia, after a meeting of their foreign ministers, announced a plan to expand its ambitious Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) programme to the Indian Ocean region that would facilitate monitoring the strategic waters.

EAM S Jaishankar, Japan's FM Yoko Kamikawa, Aus' FM Penny Won and US Secretary Antony Blinken at Quad meeting in Japan **PHOTO: PTI**

The Quad also said that it was working for early operationalisation of its South Asia programme through India's Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region.

The meeting was attended by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa and Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong.

It said the Quad continues to advance the development of a "trusted, secure and robust" telecommunication network, and announced a plan to roll out Open Radio Access Networks (Open RAN) in island nation Palau.

The Quad foreign ministers also expressed "deepest concern over the war raging in Ukraine including its terrible and tragic humanitarian consequences."

India will have more contacts with Ukraine and Russia as talking to both sides are important to resolve conflict, said Jaishankar.

"We reiterate the call for concerted action against all UN-listed terrorist groups including Al-Qa'ida, ISIS/Daesh, Lashkar e-Tayyiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), and their proxy groups," the ministers said in the statement. On the situation in Gaza, the foreign ministers said the large-scale loss of civilian lives and the humanitarian crisis there is "unacceptable". They also voiced concern over the "worsening" political, security and humanitarian situation in Myanmar, including in Rakhine state. —*PTI*

HONOURING CAUVERY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar offered 'Bagina' at KRS Dam at Srirangapatna on Monday **PHOTO: SALAR**

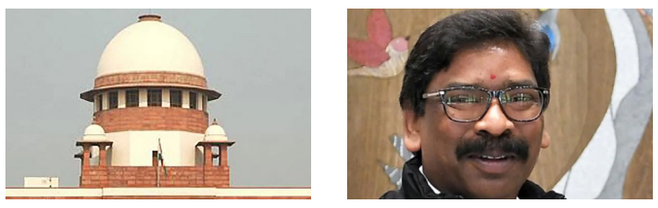
SC upholds bail granted to Soren

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

In a relief to Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, the Supreme Court on Monday dismissed the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) plea challenging a High Court order granting him bail in a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam.

The apex court said the Jharkhand High Court's 28 June order granting bail to Soren was a "very well reasoned judgement". "We are not inclined to interfere with the impugned order," a bench of Justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan said.

However, the top court said that since the observations made by the High Court were with regard to consideration for granting bail, the same would not influence the trial judge, either at the stage of trial or any other proceedings.



The Apex court said the Jharkhand High Court's 28 June order granting bail to CM Hemant Soren was well reasoned judgement **PHOTO: PTI**

Soren, the executive president of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, had resigned as chief minister shortly before the ED arrested him on 31 January in the case. After coming out of jail on bail in the case, he returned as the chief minister of Jharkhand on 4 July.

Soren's lawyer had earlier contended that he was falsely implicated in the criminal case by the central agency. —*PTI*

K'taka to file FIRs for going above 130 kmph from 1 Aug

BENGALURU, 29 JULY

FIR would be registered against those driving beyond 130 kilometres per hour anywhere in Karnataka from 1 August, a senior traffic police official said on Monday.

According to him, over-speeding causes about 90 per cent of fatal accidents in the State.

Citing data, Additional Director General of Police (Traffic and Road Safety) Alok Kumar said 155 persons sped at more than 130 kmph on Bengaluru-Mysuru Highway on 25 July.

Speaking to PTI, Kumar explained that under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) - 281 for rash and negligent driving, once the speed limit is beyond 120 Kmph, it becomes rash or dangerous driving. Recalling an accident on a NICE (Nandi Infrastructure Corridor Enterprise) road earlier this month, he said three people were killed in the mishap and the offending vehicle involved in it was being driven at a speed of 160 kmph.

He said the new rule will be applicable to all the roads and not be only limited to highways.

"In other cases too, we are using speed laser guns. We have distributed 155 speed laser guns. Day time, it is easier to record but at night, using it manually becomes slightly challenging," he noted. According to him, the speed limit on national highways across the country as of now is 100 kmph while the state and other highways have lower speed limits. —*PTI*

Counselling for NEET-UG to start from 14 August

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

The counselling for the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test Undergraduate (NEET-UG) 2024 will start from 14 August, according to an MCC notice issued on Monday. However the registration for the process of counselling is likely to start from the first week of August, Dr B Srinivas, Secretary of the National Medical Commission (NMC) said. The candidates are advised to visit the MCC website for the latest news and notices for counselling. "The counselling will take place for the allotment of approximately 1.10 lakh MBBS seats in around 710 medical colleges across the country," Srinivas said. —*PTI*

Court junks activist Medha Patkar's 5-month jail term

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

A court here on Monday suspended the sentence of five months' simple imprisonment awarded to Narmada Bachao Andolan leader Medha Patkar in a defamation case filed against her by Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena 23 years ago, when he headed an NGO in Gujarat. On an appeal filed by Patkar, Metropolitan Magistrate Raghav Sharma suspended the sentence and also issued a notice to the opposite party (LG), Saxena's counsel Gajinder Kumar said. The court also granted bail to Patkar on a bail bond and surety bond of Rs 25,000, he said. Kumar, who received the notice, said a reply has to be filed before the next date of hearing in the matter on 4 September. —*PTI*

MP Kota Srinivas Poojary appointed BJP's whip in LS

BENGALURU, 29 JULY

A day after former Karnataka BJP MP C H Vijayashankar was appointed as Meghalaya governor, the BJP central leadership had another bonanza for the state. Udupi-Chikkamagaluru MP Kota Srinivas Poojary was appointed as a whip of BJP in Lok Sabha on Monday. He served as the minister of Social Welfare Department and Backward Classes Welfare Department of Karnataka between 2021 and 2023. He was also the Leader of the Karnataka Legislative Council. —*Salar News*

4 killed in blast at scrap dealer's shop in J&K's Sopore

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

Four people were killed in a blast in the Sopore area of Jammu and Kashmir on Monday, officials said here. The blast occurred inside the shop of a scrap dealer at Sher Colony in Sopore town of Baramulla district. Some people were unloading scrap from a truck when the incident occurred, the officials said. While two persons died on the spot, two others succumbed to injuries later. All the deceased Nazir Ahmad Nadroo, 40, Aazim Ashraf Mir, 20, Aadil Rashid Bhat, 23, and Mohammad Azhar, 25 were residents of Sher Colony. The exact nature and cause of the explosion was not immediately known. A team of forensic experts has been rushed to the site, the officials added. —*PTI*

BHAKER EYES BRONZE

India's Olympics medal hopes hangs in balance

Lakshya Sen, Manu Bhaker and Sarabjot Singh **PHOTOS: PTI**

PARIS, 29 JULY

Forced to make a fresh start after his opening win was wiped off the record books, unfazed Indian ace Lakshya Sen stamped his class to defeat Julien Carraggi of Belgium in straight games in their men's singles group match of the Olympic Games' badminton competition here on Monday.

The 22-year-old Sen, who is making his Olympic debut, beat Carraggi 21-19 21-14 in the Group L match that lasted 43 minutes. Sen's victory over Kevin Cordon, a Tokyo Olympics semifinalist, in the opening Group L match on Sunday was "deleted" after his Guatemalan opponent pulled out of the Olympics due to a left elbow injury.

In shooting the confident Manu Bhaker placed herself in contention for a second Olympic medal as she combined with Sarabjot Singh to make the bronze playoff in the 10m air pistol mixed team event but Ramita Jindal ended seventh in the 10m air rifle women's competition here on Monday. The Indians will face Koreans Oh Ye Jin and Lee Wonho, who shot 579, in the bronze-medal match.

The Indian men's hockey team secured a 1-1 draw with Argentina in their second Pool B match at the Paris 2024 Olympics at the Stade Yves-du-Manoir on Monday. —*PTI*

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Vandalism hits communication lines in France

The French government says multiple telecommunications lines have been hit by acts of vandalism, affecting fiber lines and fixed and mobile phone lines as cities around France are hosting events for the 2024 Paris Olympics. The scale of the impact is unclear, as is whether it has affected any Olympic activities. The vandalism came after arson attacks hit train networks around France on Friday, hours before the Olympics opening ceremony.

GOVT ESTIMATES CENTRE'S DEBT TO RISE TO ₹185L CR

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

The government estimates its debt, including external borrowing, valued at current exchange rate and public account and other liabilities will increase to Rs 185 lakh crore, or 56.8 per cent of the GDP, during the current fiscal year.

The total debt stood at Rs 171.78 lakh crore, or 58.2 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP), at the end of March 2024, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha on Monday.

As per the International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook, April 2024, India's Gross Domestic Product at current prices has already reached USD 3.57 trillion in 2023-24, he said.

Replying to another question, Chaudhary said the growth rate of the private final consumption expenditure (PFCE) at constant prices in 2022-23 and 2023-24 is 6.8 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively, he said, quoting provisional GDP estimates for 2023-24 released by the National Statistical Office.

The growth rate of PFCE at current prices in 2022-23 and 2023-24 is 14.2 per cent and 8.5 per cent, respectively, he said, adding that the ratio of PFCE to the GDP at current prices in 2023-24 is 60.3 per cent. —*PTI*

SC refuses to stay HC order junking Bihar's 65% quota

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to stay a Patna High Court order setting aside the amended reservation laws in Bihar that enabled the Nitish Kumar government to raise quotas for Dalits, tribals and backward classes from 50 per cent to 65 per cent.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud, Justice JB Pardiwla and Justice Manoj Misra, however, agreed to hear 10 petitions of the Bihar government against the Patna High Court verdict. The top court, which did not even issue notices on the pleas, admitted the appeals for hearing and said the petitions would be listed in September.

Appearing for the state government, senior advocate Shyam Divan urged the bench to stay the high court order. He referred to a similar case of Chhattisgarh and said the top court had stayed the order of the high court in that case.

Earlier, the state government had moved the top court against the judgement. A division bench of the high court had allowed a bunch of petitions challenging the Bihar Reservation of Vacancies in Posts and Services Act, 2023 and the Bihar Reservation (Amendment) Act, 2023, while "leaving the parties to suffer their respective costs". —*PTI*

IN 538 SEATS

ADR flags discrepancy in LS vote counting

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

Poll rights body Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) has claimed that there is a discrepancy in the number of votes polled and the number of votes counted in 538 constituencies in the Lok Sabha election.

According to an analysis by the ADR released in a press conference on Monday, in the recent Lok Sabha polls a total of 5,54,598 votes counted are less than the votes polled in 362 parliamentary constituencies while a total of 35,093 votes have been counted in excess of the votes polled in 176 parliamentary constituencies. A reaction from the Election Commission was awaited on the matter.

A reaction from the Election Commission is awaited. **PHOTO: PTI**

"In addition, the inordinate delay in the release of final voter turnout data, absence of disaggregated constituency and polling station figures in absolute numbers and whether the elections results were declared based on final reconciled data has raised concerns and public suspicion regarding the correctness of the election results," said ADR founder Jagdeep Chokkar while addressing a press conference.

The report said Election Commission has so far failed to give any reasonable explanation in declaring the election results before releasing the final and authentic data on vote count, the mismatch in EVM votes polled EVM votes counted, increase in voter turn-out, non-disclosure of number of votes polled in numbers, unreasonable delay in release of votes polled data and the clean-up of certain data from its website.

As per the research conducted by a team of experts and ADR, serious discrepancies were found between the number of voters in different constituencies and the number of votes counted. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

2 techies killed as BBMP garbage truck hits bike

BENGALURU, 29 JULY

Two people were killed when a Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) garbage truck collided with their motorcycle near KR Circle on Sunday night. The victim Prashanth, 27, a resident of Banaswadi, and Shilpa from Andhra Pradesh techies working at a private firm were out for dinner when the incident happened. According to Halasuru Gate Police, "After the collision they fell on the road, and a truck coming from behind smashed them." The injured duo was rushed to the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Medical College and Hospital in Shivajinagar, where they succumbed to their injuries. Speaking to Reporters, BBMP Chief Commissioner, Tushar Grinath said, "Investigation into the matter is going on, and we are not sure if the accident was caused by the garbage truck as there was another truck who ran over them. If the police issue a statement stating that it happened from the BBMP side, we will go by the law and give compensation to the families." Prashanth's father, Lokesh, has demanded the immediate arrest of the truck driver, expressing his refusal to take custody of his son's body until justice is served. ***—Salar News***

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

'Free bikes for meritorious SSLC minority students'

KOLAR, 29 JULY

Housing and Minority affair Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan announced gift vehicles to minority students who scored high marks in SSLC and PUC exams. Speaking at the Minority Programme event in Bengaluru, on Monday he said, "I will gift vehicles to 32 students who excelled in their SSLC and PUC exams, from my personal expense." This initiative aims to reward students from minority communities by providing them two-wheelers. He expressed confidence in serving as a minority minister for the remaining term of the government. In addressing recent political controversies, Khan defended the actions of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, clarifying that no irregularities occurred concerning a land issue involving a property transfer and layout development in his department. ***.—Salar News***

ILYF to start bank to fund Lingayat entrepreneurs

BENGALURU, 29 JULY

Healthcare entrepreneur Dr Chinmaya Chigateri became the president of International Lingayat Youth Forum (ILYF) during its annual general body meeting on Sunday. ILYF is a business network developed for entrepreneurs from Lingayat community. In his inaugural address, Chigateri outlined three major initiatives for the upcoming year. "Firstly, we intend to create a funding desk for entrepreneurs. Second, we intend to establish ILYF Souharda Credit Bank and third, we intend to expand our activities to the hitherto uncharted countries," he said. The establishment of the ILYF Souharda Credit Bank is aimed at providing financial support to Lingayath entrepreneurs. Since its formation in 2012, ILYF has facilitated business activities resulting in a collective turnover of around Rs 5,000 crore, showcasing its substantial impact on the global business landscape. ***—Salar News***

No nod for BJP-JD(S) foot march, says Home Minister

CM says Cong will politically counter Oppn's march

BENGALURU, 29 JULY

Karnataka police will not grant permission to the planned BJP-JD(S)' foot march, Home Minister G Parameshwara declared on Monday, as the ruling Congress said the Opposition's move seeking to highlight alleged scams and put the government on the mat would be countered politically.

BJP State President BY Vijayendra asserted that the-week-long foot march from City to Mysuru on 3 August — demanding the resignation of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah over the alleged scam in the allotment of sites to land losers by Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), including to his wife Parvathi, and financial irregularities in corporations cannot be suppressed.

Siddaramaiah ***PHOTO: FB***

G Parameshwara ***PHOTO: FB***

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the ruling Congress will counter politically Opposition's foot march.

Home Minister G Parameshwara said: "We will not give permission for the 'padayatra' (foot march), let them (BJP-JDS) do it; we won't say no, but police department will not officially give any permission."

"Let them protest. There will be several legal matters so we don't give permission. Even we were not given when we held the padayatra (When BJP was in power). We did it too (without permission). We won't stop them...we will facilitate and ensure no problem happens to them," he said.

Asked whether the Congress is making any plans to counter the opposition's foot march, Parameshwara said State President DK Shivakumar is preparing a strategy.

"We will have to counter it. They are doing politics, so we too will have to do politics. We will do it from the party, not by using the government," he said.

Meanwhile, asserting that their struggle and foot march cannot be suppressed, Vijayendra, speaking at a preparatory meeting here for the foot march, said his party workers will not shy away from the protest because of "barren threats" of Siddaramaiah.

Siddaramaiah said in Mysuru: "What is there in MUDA to put a black spot on me? I have already formed a judicial commission to probe into it. Have they (opposition) ever formed a judicial commission during their tenure? There is no fault on my part, still, as there should be no suspicion in the minds of the people, a judicial commission has been formed." *—PTI*

'Ready to discuss Mekedatu project with TN'

MYSURU, 29 JULY

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday said his government was ready to discuss with Tamil Nadu regarding implementation of Mekedatu project across river Cauvery, but the neighbouring state was not coming forward despite it not "causing any problem to them".

If the Centre gives necessary permissions, the State is ready to implement the project, he told reporters here.

Siddaramaiah along with Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, several Ministers and officals today offered 'bagina' (traditional thanksgiving) to river Cauvery at Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) dam in Srirangapatna taluk in Mandya district.

CM Siddaramaiah claimed that Tamil Nadu was not coming forward to solve the issue ***PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA***

It is customary to offer a 'bagina' to the rivers in the State, when the dams are filled to their maximum capacity.

Shivakumar, who is also the Water Resources Minister, had recently made a passionate appeal to the Tamil Nadu government to cooperate with the implementation of the Mekedatu project, stating that it would be more beneficial to the neighbouring State.

Mekedatu is a multi-purpose (drinking water and power) project proposed by Karnataka, which involves building a balancing reservoir near Kanakapura in Ramanagara district (now renamed as Bengaluru South district).

Tamil Nadu has been opposing the project, raising apprehensions that the state would be affected if the project takes shape. *—PTI*

BJP leaders to survey flood-hit areas

BENGALURU, 29 JULY

Karnataka BJP unit has organised six teams to visit the flood affected areas on 30 and 31 July. This Yatra is organised by BJP prominent figures who will be in charge of going to the flood affected districts and survey these areas.

The prominent leaders are Opposition Leader R Ashok, MLAs Araga Jnanendra and CN Ashwath Narayan, Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, Deputy Leader of Opposition Aravind Bellad, and former minister B Sudhakar. They will cover regions including Mangaluru, Belagavi, Shivamogga, Kodagu, Udupi, Raichur, Yadgir, Bagalkote, Vijayapura, Koppal, Ballari, and Vijayanagara districts.

The decision to dispatch these teams was announced by BJP State President BY Vijayendra, who criticised Congress government for its way of handling flood situation and other governance issues. He accused Congress of neglecting development work and using the funds to the schemes like the 'Gruha Lakshmi' as political tools.

Vijayendra also highlighted ongoing issues such as the alleged mismanagement in site allocations under Karnataka Shops and Commercial Establishments Act, 1961, and pointed to scandals involving Valmiki Nigam and MUDA, claiming that these have disproportionately affected the poorer sections of society. *—Salar News*

INTERNATIONAL TIGERS DAY

Students wear tiger face masks to create awareness on saving tigers on International Tiger Day, at Jayanagar in Bengaluru, on Monday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Devadasi women's forum launches docus, magazine

BENGALURU, 29 JULY

Vimukta Devadasi Women's Forum has launched a documentary and a magazine aimed at highlighting the struggles and achievements of the Devadasi community in Karnataka.

The documentary titled 'Waves of Change: Ten Years of Empowerment' and the magazine titled 'Vimukta Dani' are "shedding light on the persistent inequalities faced by the Devadasi community and to celebrate the progress we made through continuous organized action," said K Ratnaprabha, former chief secretary of Karnataka government who works for the forum.

Despite centuries of discrimination based on caste and religion, the Devadasi community at Kushtagi in Koppal district under the leadership of the forum secured land ownership, housing and economic empowerment. The forum was able to stop the tradition of 'muttukattu', which involves dedicating girls to temples as Devadasis by tying a pearl necklace around their necks after a certain age, at several places in north Karnataka.

- The documentary titled 'Waves of Change: Ten Years of Empowerment' and the magazine titled 'Vimukta Dani' are "shedding light on the persistent inequalities faced by Devadasis

The forum also organised mass marriages for Devadasis and couples who participated in these received an incentive of Rs 5 lakh. *—Salar News*

'NOTHING FOR K'TAKA'

CM accuses FM Nirmala of 'lying' about Budget

MYSURU, 29 JULY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday accused Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman of "lying" as he targeted her and BJP-led NDA government at Centre for meting out "injustice' to State in Union Budget 2024.

He alleged that BJP was trying to taint Congress-ruled Karnataka as a "corrupt State". The Chief Minister also said he and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar will be travelling to New Delhi as they have been called by the Congress high command to "discuss the party and the government" but did not elaborate.

"Pre-budget meeting was called, we had said there that you (Centre) have said you will give Rs 5,300 crore for Upper Bhadra project. It is not given. The 15th Finance Commission in its report has recommended Rs 5,495 crore as special grants, is it there? It was said Rs 3,000 crore will be given for the peripheral ring road (in Bengaluru). It was promised to give Rs 3,000 crore for development of water bodies, is it there (in the Budget)?" Siddaramaiah asked.

He said: "None of these are in the Budget, is it not injustice? (grants) have been given to Andhra and Bihar, what is given to Karnataka? Union Ministers HD Kumaraswamy and Nirmala Sitharaman could have at least said they will make efforts to ensure Karnataka gets (its due)."

The Chief Minister was responding to a question on Sitharaman on Sunday dismissing his allegation that Karnataka did not get its due share in the budget this year.

Maharashtra is number one in tax collection, Karnataka is number two -- "what is that contribution we have not given?" the Chief Minister said.

On Centre accusing the State government of borrowing more loans, he said: "We have done within the fiscal responsibility act limits -- 25 per cent per cent of the GSDP while they (Centre) have borrowed over Rs 15 lakh crore." *—PTI*

Baseless, says Home Minister on FM's words

Terming as "baseless" Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's statement about industries allegedly wanting to leave the state due to deteriorating law and order situation, Home Minister G Parameshwara on Monday said no such case has been reported. Companies that are looking for investment opportunities usually keep their options open, based on certain parameters that benefit them, he said. *—PTI*

TRAFFIC NOTE

Bengaluru Peenya Flyover reopened after 2 years ***PHOTO: X***

Traffic rules announced for Gunjur festival in City

BENGALURU, 29 JULY

Whitefield traffic police have imposed specific restrictions for Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV) in the Gunjur, Balagere, Gunjur Palya, and Vinayaka Nagar areas for the town festival, which includes Deepotsava and Pallakki events on 30 and 31 July. Specific routes for heavy goods vehicles (HGV) have been designated to ensure smooth traffic flow.

According to the traffic advisory, HGVs from Hoskote should turn left at Hope Farm and proceed to Sarjapura via Channasandra. HGVs from HAL Old Airport Road must move via Varthur Kodi, Hope Farm, and Channasandra to Sarjapura. HGVs from Sarjapura can travel via Chikkathirupathi, Dommasandra, Kodathi, and reach Bellandur. HGVs from Bellandur can move via Kodati, Dommasandra, and proceed to Sarjapura. BMTC buses from Gunjur Depot-41 towards Varthur should use Nerege Road, via Hosahalli, Madhura Nagara.

Meanwhile, KR Puram and HAL Airport traffic police conducted special operations on 27 and 28 July, targeting reckless wheeling and traffic violations.

Additionallythe Eastern traffic section conducted a crackdown on 28 July on offences such as refusing to hire, and violating parking rules. This operation resulted in 1506 cases, with fines totalling Rs. 7.53 lakh. *—Salar News*

PEENYA FLYOVER REOPENS FOR HEAVY VEHICLES

BENGALURU, 29 JULY

The Peenya flyover on PB Road, which had been banned for large vehicles for the past two years, has now been opened to all vehicle types. Previously, the restriction on buses, trucks and other vehicles led to considerable delays on Tumakuru Road, particularly affecting travellers from North, South, and Central Karnataka, and causing significant traffic jams. The National Highways Authority of India and local traffic authorities have approved the use of the flyover. However, there will be a weekly restriction every Friday from 6.00 am to 6.00 am on Saturday for maintenance purposes. This temporary measure is essential for ongoing upgrades and maintenance work on the structure. The decision to resume heavy vehicle traffic was based on safety assessments conducted by experts from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), who performed load testing on the flyover. *—Salar News*

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Indian deaths worries Kalaburagi families

DANIEL GEORGE
BENGALURU, 29 JULY

The death of Indian national Ravi Moun on the battlefield during Russia-Ukraine war has sparked concern among the families of three youths from Kalaburagi who are also trapped there.

Haryana native Moun had gone to Russia in search of a job but was allegedly "tricked" into joining Russian Army, his family has claimed. With Moun's death, a total of 5 Indians died on the battlefield.

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Moscow assured that all Indian nationals would be discharged from the Army soon.

Syed Iliyas Hussain, Mohammed Sameer Ahmed and Abdul Nayoom from Kalaburagi have been attached to Wagner army in Ukraine for six months.

Syed Iliyas Hussain, Mohammed Sameer Ahmed and Abdul Nayoom hailing from Kalaburagi are currently trapped in Russian army ***PHOTO: SALAR***

Nawaz Ali Kalagi, father of Hussain, pleaded with Centre and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to help bring his son home. Kalagi is employed as a head constable with Madbol police station in Kalaburagi district. "My son went to Russia on 18 December, 2023 after he was promised a job as a security helper with a salary of Rs 2 lakh per month. Now, he along with Ahmed and Nayoom are asked to fight in the war," Kalagi told **Salar News** from Kalaburagi. "Last month, I went to New Delhi and met Charanjeet Singh, Additional Secretary in Ministry of External Affairs, who assured me that the government was in touch with their counterparts in Russia and that my son and others would return home soon. But after the death of Moun on the battlefield, we are concerned about our children, Kalagi said.

"My son Hussain spoke to me a couple of days ago. I assured him that after the visit of Modi to Russia he along with the two other boys could return home soon. But my son told me that nothing much has been done to repatriate them." *—Salar News*

SC to hear Sisodia's bail pleas on 5 Aug

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

Supreme Court on Monday said it would hear on 5 August pleas filed by AAP leader Manish Sisodia, seeking bail in corruption and money-laundering cases linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. The matter came up for hearing before a bench of Justice BR Gavai and Justice KV Viswanathan. Additional Solicitor General SV Raju told the bench that while the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had filed its response on Sisodia's plea, it had not come on record. Sisodia had earlier moved the apex court challenging the Delhi High Court's 21 May order dismissing his bail pleas. He had challenged in the high court a trial court's 30 April order rejecting his bail applications in the two cases. He was arrested by CBI on 26 February, 2023, for his alleged role in the liquor policy case. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Stray cattle turned entire country into chowkidars: SP MP

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

The entire country has turned into 'chowkidars' who are unable to sleep due to the stray cattle menace, Samajwadi Party MP Dimple Yadav said on Monday in a jibe at the government and asked if there was any provision in the Union budget to solve the problem. Speaking during a discussion on the Union budget, Yadav highlighted several pressing issues faced by farmers and youngsters, questioning the government's commitment to its promises. "Our country is an agrarian nation and if we cannot ensure the future of our youngsters, we are deviating from our aim," Yadav said, emphasising the importance of prioritising agricultural and youth welfare. Yadav also sought to corner the government on farmer suicides. *—PTI*

No trust motion against TN Mayor fails

KANCHEEPURAM, 29 JULY

A no-confidence motion moved against Kancheepuram Mayor M Mahalakshmi by councillors including from her party, the DMK, failed on Monday after a no-show by the council members, a senior official said. M Senthil Murugan, Commissioner, Kancheepuram City Municipal Corporation, said the officials were prepared for the session to hold the no-confidence motion on Monday and kept the ballot papers ready. "Since no member turned up, there was no quorum. So, the no confidence motion did not succeed," he told reporters without divulging further details. Reportedly, over 30 councillors, including some of those from the DMK had moved the no-confidence motion against Mahalakshmi earlier, making corruption charges, among others, against her *—PTI*

BJP MP demands UT for J'khand, sparks protest

RANCHI, 29 JULY

The ruling JMM on Monday protested outside the assembly here against BJP MP Nishikant Dubey's statement in Lok Sabha, demanding parts of Jharkhand, West Bengal and Bihar be declared a Union Territory to check infiltration from Bangladesh. He claimed that the population of tribals in the Santhal Parganas region was on a decline due to the growing influx of "Bangladeshi infiltrators". Staging a protest outside the assembly, state minister Deepak Birua said the BJP wants to divide Jharkhand in the name of infiltration. On the other side, state BJP president Babulal Marandi said Dubey's statement in Parliament was his personal remark. *—PTI*

Police use water cannon to disperse BJP workers during their protest outside AAP office over Delhi coaching centre drowning incident, in New Delhi on Monday. Meanwhile, the civic body sealed the basements of six more coaching institutes in Central Delhi *PHOTO: PTI*

Bulldozer action against UPSC centres after Delhi deaths

Parliament witnesses fiery debates; 5 more arrested

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

Five more people were arrested on Monday and bulldozers began demolishing encroachments as anguish over the deaths of three civil service aspirants who drowned in the basement of a coaching centre echoed across the city, from parliament to the streets of Old Rajinder Nagar.

The arrested have been sent to judicial custody for 14 days by a court.

While Lok Sabha members across party lines demanded an inquiry, hundreds of students continued their protests near Rau's IAS Study Circle in the west Delhi locality where the horror unfolded Saturday night. The Union Home Ministry constituted a high-level committee, headed by an Additional Secretary, to probe the deaths On Sunday, the civic body sealed the basements of six more coaching institutes in Central Delhi's Old Rajinder Nagar and one in North West Delhi's Mukherjee Nagar Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and urged him to direct the government to pay Rs 1 crore compensation to the next of kin of the students who died in the rain-flooded basement of a coaching centre in Delhi. Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on 29 July said the culture of coaching centres has become no less than a "gas chamber" and stressed the need to examine the huge expenditure incurred on newspaper advertisements by them. The government issued guidelines on the regulation of coaching centers in January this year, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan informed Lok Sabha on Monday, even as he evaded a direct reply to a question on the deaths. *—PTI*

Civil services aspirant writes to CJI

A civil services aspirant Avinash Dubey has written to Chief Justice DY Chandrachud seeking action against officials responsible for the deaths of three fellow students who died in the rain-flooded basement of a coaching centre. Dubey also urged the apex court to direct officials to find a permanent solution to the recurring problem of waterlogging in areas such as Rajinder Nagar and Mukherjee Nagar, major coaching hubs in the national capital.

—PTI

The govt in January 2024 again sent an advisory to states. That is already in public. Had the state govts followed it, this unfortunate incident would not have happened

-Dharmendra Pradhan, Education Minister

Strongly oppose any pact on Teesta River between India, B'desh: Didi

KOLKATA, 29 JULY

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday asserted that her government is opposed to any agreement between India and Bangladesh over sharing of the Teesta river water.

Maintaining that she loves the people of Bangladesh, Banerjee said sharing of Teesta water will mean "depriving north Bengal of even drinking water", let alone any provision for irrigation purposes.

Banerjee also alleged that the State government was not invited to discussions between India and Bangladesh over renewal of the Farakka Treaty, stating that her State is a stakeholder in the issue, as river Ganga flows into the neighbouring nation from West Bengal.

Mamata Banerjee *PHOTO: PTI*

She also blamed the construction of a "series of hydropower projects in Sikkim, deforestation in upper catchment and impact of climate change" as reasons behind the Teesta river's health suffering.

Demanded formation of India-Bhutan river commission at NITI meet

Mamata Banerjee on Monday told the assembly that she demanded the formation of an India-Bhutan river commission at the recent NITI Aayog meeting in Delhi.

She also took exception to demands made by some BJP leaders over creating a union territory comprising two districts of Bengal and some in Bihar, and to make north Bengal a part of the northeast. *—PTI*

Minister moves notice on Didi's 'NITI' humiliation

KOLKATA, 29 JULY

West Bengal Minister Manas Bhunia on Monday moved a special notice in the Assembly stating it was a matter of serious concern that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's microphone was "switched off" in the Niti Aayog meeting in New Delhi on 27 July when she was speaking on behalf of the State.

Banerjee claimed that she was humiliated as she was not allowed to speak at the NITI Aayog meeting. Bhunia said it was against the spirit of cooperative federalism which has now relegated to switching off the microphone. *—PTI*

SC seeks Ajit's response in NCP faction dispute

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

The Supreme Court on Monday sought the responses of Ajit Pawar and his 40 MLAs on a plea moved by the Sharad Pawar faction of the NCP challenging Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar's decision declaring the group led by the deputy chief minister as the real NCP.

A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra took note of the submissions made by senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, who appeared in the court of behalf of the Sharad Pawar faction, that the plea needed an urgent hearing keeping in mind the short remnant tenure of the State Assembly.

The bench said it will hear the plea by Jayant Patil and Jitendra Awhad, lawmakers from the Sharad Pawar faction of the NCP, just after it has heard a similar petition of the Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray camp. The Thackeray group has filed a similar petition contesting the Speaker's decision in favour of Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and his MLAs that they represent the real Shiv Sena.

"We will issue notice. All objections, including on grounds of maintainability, will be decided at final disposal. Liberty is granted to serve the other respondents with 'dasti' (a mode of serving notices)," the CJI said. Narwekar held on 15 February that the NCP faction led by Ajit Pawar, who rebelled against his uncle Sharad Pawar and joined the BJP.

The speaker had rejected the disqualification petitions filed by the rival NCP factions seeking disqualification of each other's MLAs. *—PTI*

Andhra govt deletes Jagan's name from welfare schemes

AMARAVATI, 29 JULY

Andhra Pradesh government has renamed half a dozen welfare schemes, some of which were named after former chief minister and YSRCP supremo YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, with yesteryear stalwarts who championed education. As part of the new nomenclature, 'Jagananna Amma Vodi', a scheme which used to offer financial help to mothers educating their children, has been renamed as 'Talliki Vandanam'. Likewise, 'Jagananna Vidya Kanuka', which used to provide education kits comprising school bags, books and other material, has been renamed as 'Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan Vidya Mitra', said a government release. *—PTI*

CBI files final chargesheet in excise case against Kejri

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

Concluding its probe in the alleged Delhi Excise Policy scam, CBI on Monday filed its final charge sheet in the case against Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and others, officials said.

CBI earlier filed one main charge sheet and four supplementaries in the case in which former Delhi deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, Telangana MLC K Kavitha and others have also been charged.

Arvind Kejriwal *PHOTO: PTI*

The agency said the one filed on Monday will be its final charge sheet in the case.

Meanwhile, Delhi High Court on Monday reserved its order on the bail plea by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the corruption case stemming from the alleged excise policy scam.

The verdict was reserved by Justice Neena Bansal Krishna after hearing the counsel appearing for the AAP leader as well as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

CBI opposed Kejriwal's bail plea in the case, saying he was the "sutradhaar" of the excise scam and if released, he could influence the witnesses.

Liquor businessman Magunta Sreenivasalu Reddy (a TDP MP) met Kejriwal on 16 March, 2021 in his office at the Delhi Secretariat and requested him to provide support in his liquor business in the national capital by tweaking the Excise Policy 2021-22 which was then in the making, the agency said in its charge sheet against K Kavitha. *—PTI*

OPPN ATTACKS DMK

Slugfest in TN amid 3 political killlings

CHENNAI, 29 JULY

Three functionaries of different political parties were allegedly hacked to death in three separate incidents in Tamil Nadu on Sunday.

All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) spokesperson Kovai Sathyan targeted Chief Minister MK Stalin and alleged lawlessness in the state.

"In less than 24 hours, three people have been murdered belonging to different political parties in Tamil Nadu - the first one from AIDMK, second from BJP and the third one from Congress. This clearly indicates the state of lawlessness in Tamil Nadu and the incompetence of CM, MK Stalin," Kovai Sathyan said.

He further alleged that the police are 'clueless' about how to act against the ruling party because the high command order to police is to not act against the people associated with DMK.

BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla also launched attacks against CM Stalin and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi *PHOTO: PTI*

According to the police, two people have been taken into custody for questioning in connection with the death of AIADMK ward secretary Padmanabhan in Cuddalore district on Sunday.

"The mysterious gang ran away after hitting Padmanabhan while he was driving his two-wheeler and murdered him on the road. May have committed murder due to enmity. Two people named Murali and Sridhar from Navaneetha Nagar area of Cuddalore have been taken for questioning," Inspector PK Sajith of Bahour Police Station said.

In a post on X, BJP state president K Annamalai condoled the death of BJP district secretary Selvakumar and hit out at the ruling DMK in the matter.

BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla also launched attacks against CM Stalin and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi.

—ANI

VOWS CASTE CENSUS

INDIA will break BJP's chakravyuh, ensure MSP: RaGa

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

Using the 'chakravyuh' metaphor as a leitmotif, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Monday claimed that an atmosphere of fear prevails all around with a group of six trapping the entire country in a 'chakravyuh' he promised would be broken by the INDIA bloc.

Thousands of years ago in Haryana's Kurukshetra, six people killed a youth, Abhimanyu, in a 'chakravyuh', he said, adding that a 'chakravyuh' has violence and fear.

"In the 21st century, another 'chakravyuh' has been prepared. It is in the form of lotus and the prime minister (Narendra Modi) wears the symbol on his chest. What was done with Abhinmanyu is being done with India, with its youth, women, farmers and small and medium businesses," he said.

Today also, there are six people at the centre of the 'chakravyuh', including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. Gandhi took the name of four more people but Speaker Om Birla disallowed it citing that they were not members of the House and hence cannot be named.

"The 'chakravyuh' that has captured India has three forces behind it: first is the idea of monopoly capital-- that two people should be allowed to own the entire Indian wealth... The second element is the institutions, agencies, CBI, ED, Income Tax department of this nation; and the third is the political executive," Gandhi said.

These three together are at the heart of the 'chakravyuh', and they have devastated this country, he said.

Gandhi said the middle class of the country probably supported the Prime Minister before this budget. *—PTI*

Ansari to remain MP as HC junks conviction

PRAYAGRAJ, 29 JULY

The Allahabad High Court on Monday set aside a Ghazipur court order sentencing Samajwadi Party MP Afzal Ansari to four years' imprisonment under the Gangsters Act over the murder of BJP MLA Krishnanand Rai in 2005.

With Justice SK Singh allowing his plea against the conviction, the SP MP can now continue as a member of Parliament.

The court also dismissed pleas by the UP government and Piyush Kumar Rai, Krishnanand Rai's son, seeking enhancement of the Ghazipur MP's sentence.

An MP-MLA court in Ghazipur had on 29 April, 2023, convicted Ansari and sentenced him to four years in jail and imposed a fine of Rs 1 lakh in the Gangsters Act case.

Following this, Ansari was disqualified as an MP. He then filed a criminal appeal before the High Court.

On 24 July, 2023, the High Court granted bail to the five-time MLA and two-time MP but declined to stay his conviction in the case. As a result, though Afzal Ansari was released from jail, his membership of Parliament was not restored.

However, later the Supreme Court stayed his conviction. His membership of Parliament was thus restored, and he also became eligible to contest the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

The apex court directed the high court to expedite the hearing of his appeal.

The High Court's judgment was reserved on 4 July this year. *—PTI*

On 24 July, 2023, High Court granted bail to the five-time MLA and two-time MP Afzal Ansari but declined to stay his conviction in the case *PHOTO: X*

PHOTO: PTI

HC extends stay on Indrani Mukerjea's abroad travel order

MUMBAI, 29 JULY

Bombay High Court on Monday extended for two weeks an ad-interim stay on a special court order that had allowed former media executive Indrani Mukerjea, the prime accused in the Sheena Bora murder case, to travel abroad. High Court last week granted an interim stay on the lower court's order after it was challenged by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The special CBI court on 19 July allowed Mukerjea, who is out on bail, to travel once to Europe (Spain and United Kingdom) for ten days between intermittent period during the next three months. CBI's advocate Shriram Shirsat had argued that it would not be appropriate to allow Mukerjea to leave the country considering she is the prime accused under trial. *—PTI*

Lyricist Javed Akhtar's X account hacked

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

Noted lyricist-screenwriter Javed Akhtar has said his X account was "hacked", following which a "totally harmless" message about the Indian contingent for the Paris Olympics 2024 was sent under his name. The 79-year-old, who actively uses the microblogging site to express his views on a range of topics, shared the update on his page on Sunday night. My X ID is hacked. There is a message ostensibly from my account about our Indian team for Olympics. It is totally harmless but not sent by me. We are in the process of complaining to the concern authorities in X, he said. He did not revealed when he found out about the alleged breach of security. *—PTI*

Drugs worth ₹61.9cr seized in Assam

AIZAWL, 29 JULY

Methamphetamine tablets worth Rs 61.9 crore has been seized in Mizoram's Champhai district, Assam Rifles said in a statement. Acting on a tip-off, Assam Rifles personnel conducted a raid in Zokhawthar village near the India-Myanmar border and seized 20.6 kg of Methamphetamine tablets on Sunday, it said. The seized tablets were handed over to the state police for further legal proceedings, it added. *—PTI*

Woman's face blackened, hair cut over affair

PRATAPGARH, 29 JULY

A married woman was tied to a tree, her hair chopped and face blackened on orders of a panchayat for allegedly having an affair with a man from her village, police said on Monday. According to police, 15 people have been arrested in connection with the incident which took place in Chhotki Ibrahimpur village under Hatigaon police station area here on Sunday. Five other accused are on the run. The woman's husband lived in Mumbai and returned home after he found out about his wife's affair. On the panchayat's orders, the woman was tied to a tree, her hair chopped off and her face blackened with soot, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) (Western), Sanjay Rai said. When the woman's lover, the father of four children, tried to save her, he was thrashed. He managed to flee from the spot, the ASP said. After receiving information about the incident, police personnel reached the spot and brought the woman to the police station, Rai said. Based on a complaint by police station in-charge Inspector Nand Lal Singh, a case was registered against 20 people and 15 of them were arrested. *—PTI*

HC orders Ramdev to remove posts on Coronil

Patanjali was fined Rs 4 crore for breaching court orders

MUMBAI, 29 JULY

Delhi High Court directed yoga guru Ramdev on Monday to take down certain "offending" social media posts in relation to the use of "Coronil" for Covid-19.

Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani said he was "allowing" a plea moved by several doctors' associations against Ramdev.

"There are directions for taking down of some of the offending posts and content. There are directions to the defendant to take down those set of tweets in three days," the judge said.

If the direction is not complied with, X will take down the content, the court added.

The bench said it has no doubt in its mind that Patanjali had an intention to flout the court order.

Meanwhile, the Bombay High Court on Monday imposed a cost of Rs 4 crore on Patanjali Ayurved Ltd for the alleged breach of a 2023 interim order that restrained the company from selling its camphor products in relation to a trademark infringement case filed by Mangalam Organics Ltd.

The court said that if the direction is not complied with, X will take down the content PHOTO: PTI

A single bench of Justice RI Chagla noted that there was a "wilful and deliberate" breach of the court order by Patanjali.

The bench disposed of a petition filed by Mangalam Organics Ltd seeking contempt action against Patanjali for selling its camphor products despite a restraining order from the court.

Justice Chagla directed Patanjali to deposit Rs 4 crore within two weeks.

This was in addition to Rs 50 lakh the High Court had directed the company to deposit earlier this month.

In August 2023, the High Court, in an interim order, prohibited Patanjali from selling or advertising its camphor products.

Mangalam Organics had filed a suit against the company alleging copyright infringement of their camphor products.

Mangalam Organics later filed an application claiming that the Ayurveda firm was in breach of the interim order as it continued selling the camphor products.

The court took note of the June 2024 affidavit submitted by Rajneesh Mishra, director of Patanjali, tendering an unconditional apology and an undertaking to abide by the orders passed by the High Court. *—PTI*

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Haryana man fighting for Russian Army dies

CHANDIGARH, 29 JULY

A 22-year-old Haryana man "sent to the frontline by the Russian Army to fight against Ukrainian forces" has died, his family claimed on Monday.

The Indian embassy in Moscow confirmed the death of Ravi Moun, who hailed from Matour village in Haryana's Kaithal district, his brother Ajay Moun said.

Ravi Moun went to Russia on 13 January after being "hired" for a transportation job but was inducted into the military, his brother claimed.

Ajay Moun wrote to the embassy on July 21 for information on his brother's whereabouts.

"The embassy told us that he has died," he said.

The family said the embassy also asked them to send a DNA test report for identification of the body.

"Ravi went to Russia on 13 January. An agent sent him to Russia for a transportation job. However, he was inducted into the Russian Army," Ajay said.

The family's claim comes days after Russia agreed to India's demand to ensure early release and return of Indian nationals inducted into the country's military.

Ajay Moun alleged that the Russian Army asked his brother to go to the frontline to fight against Ukrainian forces or face 10 years in jail.

He was trained to dig trenches and later sent to the frontline, Ajay said.

Ajay also requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to bring his brother's mortal remains back to India. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Indian asked to go to frontline after PM's visit

Days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi raised the issue of Indians fighting in the Russian army against Ukraine during his visit to Russia in July, Gagandeep Singh from Punjab's Gurdaspur had said that his hopes to return home had been dashed as he has been asked to return to the frontline. *—Agencies*

SC refuses to interfere in UGC-NET exam cancellation

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a PIL challenging the government's decision to cancel the UGC-NET examination following alleged question paper leak.

A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, however, said the dismissal of the PIL does not amount to a decision on the merits of the PIL as it was filed by a lawyer and not by aggrieved students.

"Why are you (lawyer) coming? Let the students come here themselves," the CJI told the lawyer, adding "while declining the above PIL, we express nothing on merits".

The bench asked advocate Ujjawal Gaur, who has filed the PIL as a petitioner, to focus on some legal matters and leave such issues for aggrieved persons.

The plea was filed against the decision of the Union education ministry and the National Testing Agency to cancel the UGC-NET exam following inputs that its integrity may have been compromised.

The Ministry on 19 June had ordered the cancellation of the UGC-NET exam and handed over the matter to the CBI for an investigation.

In the plea, Gaur also sought a direction to immediately stay the proposed re-examination of the UGC-NET exam until the CBI completes its inquiry into the paper leak allegations.

The petitioner submitted that the "unwarranted" cancellation of the exam has caused significant distress, anxiety, and an unnecessary expenditure of resources for the aspirants who have rigorously prepared for this crucial examination. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

SC commences Lok Adalat

In a first, the first seven benches of the Supreme Court commenced a special Lok Adalat at 2 pm on Monday for an amicable resolution of disputes, with media cameras being allowed inside courtrooms. The week-long special Lok Adalat, celebrating 75 years of the Supreme Court, began with the aim to "facilitate amicable settlements of suitable pending cases", in matters that have "elements of settlement". It will be held till 3 August, in an effort to reduce the pendency of cases. *—PTI*

SC NOTICE TO BIHAR ON BRIDGES COLLAPSE

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

The Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Bihar government and others, including the NHAI, on a PIL that raised concerns about the safety and longevity of bridges in the state after several of them collapsed over the last few weeks.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra issued notices to the state government and others on the PIL that sought directions for a structural audit and setting up of an expert panel to identify bridges that can be either strengthened or demolished based on its findings.

Besides the state and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), the top court also issued notices to Road Construction Department's additional chief secretary, Bihar Rajya Pul Nirman Nigam Ltd's chairperson and rural works department's additional chief secretary.

Ten incidents of bridge collapse have been reported in Bihar's Siwan, Saran, Madhubani, Araria, East Champaran and Kishanganj districts in the last four weeks. Many have claimed that heavy rainfall might have contributed to the incidents. *—PTI*

UNABLE TO DIGEST 2018 TUTICORIN POLICE FIRING: HC

CHENNAI, 29 JULY

The Madras High Court on Monday orally observed that it was unable to digest the 2018 Tuticorin police firing against anti-Sterlite protestors, in which 13 people were killed.

A division bench comprising Justices S S Sundar and N Senthilkumar made the observation while hearing a petition from social activist Henri Tiphagne, seeking to reopen the probe closed by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) into the incident.

The bench said when the people were running, the police chased them and opened fire. "Our vision is purely public interest".

People were threatened, their houses were searched. "How could this happen". People were afraid of identifying themselves as victims, the bench added.

The bench said this situation should never happen in future.

"The whole situation was controlled by a few individuals. The entire system is to protect the individuals", the bench added.

The bench directed the other authorities to extend their co-operation to the DVAC. *—PTI*

Intense rains and gusty winds lash parts of Kerala

T'PURAM, 29 JULY

After a brief lull, the southwest monsoon intensified, bringing widespread rains to many parts of Kerala on Monday, triggering isolated incidents of mudslides and the uprooting of trees.

Incessant downpours and gusty winds have lashed several parts of the northern districts of Wayanad and Kozhikode since last night.

Mudslides were reported in the plantation area of Mundakkai in Wayanad. Following heavy rains, many families in Puthumala in the district were shifted to relief camps, authorities said.

Meanwhile, gusty winds caused widespread destruction in the high ranges of Kozhikode district.

"At least seven houses were damaged in the area as huge trees were uprooted and fell upon them in strong winds. The power supply was also disrupted widely," a local resident said. The shutters of Pathazhakund Dam in Thrissur and Peppara and Aruvikkara Dams in Thiruvananthapuram would be raised in the coming hours to release excess waters, the respective district authorities said. According to the India Meteorological Department heavy rainfall and gusty winds with speeds of 50 kmph are likely to occur at one or two places in the Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, and Alappuzha districts. Moderate rainfall and gusty winds with speeds of 40 kmph are likely to occur at one or two places in all other districts of the state. *—PTI*

SCRIBE HELD FOR GRABBING UP GOVT LAND WORTH ₹ 1,000 CR

KANPUR, 29 JULY

Fourteen people, including a TV journalist, have been arrested on charges of grabbing government land having a market value of over Rs 1,000 crore, police said on Monday.

Journalist Avneesh Dixit and others were arrested on Sunday after they were named in complaints lodged by the revenue officer and Samuel Gurudev Singh, to whom the land had been leased, they said. Additional Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Harish Chandra said Dixit has been arrested and FIRs have been registered at Kotwali police station in the matter. Efforts are being made to nab other accused.

Dixit will be produced in court during the day. District Magistrate (DM) Rakesh Kumar Singh said action was taken after information was received that Dixit along with three dozen others had allegedly trespassed about 7,500 square metres of government land in the posh Civil Lines pocket which has a market value of over Rs 1,000 crore.

Dixit and his men allegedly broke the locks and put their own on the rooms, Singh said. *—PTI*

J&K man dies after 'assault' by police

JAMMU, 29 JULY

A 27-year-old man died under mysterious circumstances after he was allegedly beaten up by police, sparking protests by his relatives and neighbours here on Monday, official sources said.

Shubam Sharma, a resident of the Bantalab locality on the outskirts of Jammu, was playing cricket near his house when a police party raided the area in search of drug traffickers on Sunday evening, the sources said.

Sharma's family alleged he was detained and severely beaten up by the cops before they left the spot. He was rushed to hospital where he died, the family said, adding the body was lying at the hospital's mortuary for postmortem. The protesters blocked the main road at Bantalab on Monday morning, demanding an inquiry into the incident and seeking justice.

"He was working as an electrician and was the only earning hand in the family...we want justice," Sharma's younger sister Shivani said.

Senior police and civil officers were rushed to the scene to persuade the protesters to disperse, assuring an investigation into the incident. *—PTI*

Angry relatives of the deceased Shubam Sharma block the main road at Bantalab during a protest over his death, on Monday PHOTO: PTI

Woman found chained to tree in M'rashtra forest

MUMBAI, 29 JULY

A 50-year-old woman was found tied to a tree with an iron chain in a forest in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg district, and a photocopy of her US passport as well as other documents, including an Aadhaar card with a Tamil Nadu address, were recovered from her, a police official said on Monday.

A shepherd heard her cries on Saturday evening in Sonurli village, some 450 kilometres from here, and alerted police after finding her chained and in distress, the official said.

"The woman was rushed to a hospital in Sawantwadi (in the state's Konkan region) and then Oros in Sindhudurg. Considering her mental and health condition, she was shifted to Goa Medical College for advanced treatment. She is out of danger. Doctors treating her said she suffers from psychiatric problems. We have found medical prescriptions in her possession," the official informed.

The official said police teams have left for Tamil Nadu, Goa and some other places to trace her relatives etc as part of the probe. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X/@ABHIJITKARAN25

CREATE MORE RUCKUS

Kanwariyas vandalise police vehicle in UP

GHAZIABAD, 29 JULY

A government vehicle, which entered a reserved lane for Kanwariyas on Monday and allegedly hit one of the pilgrims, was overturned by an angry mob, police said.

The incident took place at around 10.30 am near Duhai rapid rail station in the Madhuban Bapu Dham police station area of the city, when an SUV, attached with hydel vigilance, entered the lane which is reserved for the movement of Kanwariyas, they said.

The vehicle, which had a siren and beacon light and 'Police' written on it allegedly hit a pilgrim, due to which some Kanwariyas vandalized the vehicle and overturned it in the middle of the road, police said.

A purported video of the incident surfaced online.

Upon getting information, police reached the spot and pacified the kanwariyas.

SUV driver Avnish Tyagi, who has been detained said that he was going to the office of Hydel Kavi Nagar from Muradnagar to attend the duty of Hydel vigilance officer, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Rajesh Kumar said.

All schools in Ghaziabad will remained closed from 29 July to 2 August due to the Kanwar Yatra, as per an order issued by the district magistrate.

Meanwhile, police wielded lathis to disperse kanwariyas who were allegedly heading towards a women's ghat in Lohargal Dham in Jhunjhunu district, an official said on Monday. Superintendent of Police Rajasrhi Raj Verma said the kanwariyas take the water from the Dham after taking a dip. *—PTI*

Kanwariyas vandalise a police vehicle that hit one of Shiva devotees on the Meerut Road, in Ghaziabad, on Monday PHOTO: PTI

SWIFTIES SWARM HILL

At least 25,000 Taylor Swift fans braved scorching heat and gathered on Olympic Hill in Munich on Saturday and Sunday to catch a free glimpse of the Eras Tour show. The stadium itself had around 74,000 fans gathered in it. The concert organiser reportedly provided water and emergency thermal blankets to those waiting on the hill. The scene has been described as resembling an anthill, with fans packed tightly together on the grassy hill. At the start of the show, Swift thanked the fans who had gathered on the hill that overlooked the stadium.

PHOTO: @TAYLORSWIFTBR

Drive to end hunger by 2030 has stalled, warns UN

About 733 million people faced hunger in 2023 – one in 11 people globally and one in five in Africa

PHOTO: @UNICEF

A goal to eliminate global hunger by 2030 looks increasingly impossible to achieve as the number of people suffering chronic hunger has barely changed over the past year, a UN report says.

The annual State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report, published on Wednesday, said about 733 million people faced hunger in 2023 – one in 11 people globally and one in five in Africa – as conflict, climate change and economic crises take their toll.

David Laborde, director of the division within the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) that helps prepare the survey, said that although progress had been made in some regions, the situation had deteriorated on a global level.

"We are in a worse situation today than nine years ago when we launched this goal to eradicate hunger by 2030," he told the news agency Reuters, saying challenges such as climate change and regional wars had grown more severe than envisaged a decade ago.

> **We must urgently step up financing to end child malnutrition. The world can and must do it. It is not only a moral imperative but also a sound investment in the future**
>
> -Catherine Russell, UNICEF Executive Director

If current trends continue, about 582 million people will be chronically undernourished by the end of the decade, the report said.

Regional trends varied significantly with hunger continuing to rise in Africa, where growing populations, wars and climate upheaval weighed heavily. By contrast, Asia has seen little change, and Latin America has improved.

The report also noted that 71.5 per cent of people in low-income countries were not able to afford a healthy diet last year, compared with 6.3 per cent in high-income countries. While famines are easy to spot, poor nutrition is more insidious but can nonetheless scar people for life, stunting both the physical and mental development of babies and children and leaving adults more vulnerable to infections and illnesses.

"Malnutrition affects a child's survival, physical growth, and brain development," UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell said in a statement.

But she noted how global child stunting rates have dropped by one-third, or 55 million, in the past two decades and said this showed investments in child nutrition can tackle the current challenges. "We must urgently step up financing to end child malnutrition. The world can and must do it. It is not only a moral imperative but also a sound investment in the future," Russell said. The UN also said the way the antihunger drive was financed had to change because greater flexibility is needed to ensure the countries most in need get help.

w"We need to change how we do things to be better coordinated, to accept that not everyone should try to do everything but really be much more focused on what we are doing and where,"

Laborde said. Laborde noted that international aid linked to food security and nutrition amounted to $76bn a year, or 0.07 percent of the world's total annual economic output.

—Courtesy, Al Jazeera

LETTERS

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SALAR سالار

Hippos don't fly, but huge animals can get airborne

In 1872 Leland Stanford, the founder of California's Stanford University, hired an eccentric inventor named Eadweard Muybridge to help resolve a supposed (but undocumented) bet: did a trotting horse's feet leave the ground with all four feet or not?

Muybridge was a skilled photographer and managed to get blurry snapshots of an "airborne" horse in mid-trot – an example of how the naked eye alone can't capture fast, subtle motions. He went on, alongside others, to establish what cinematography became. He also continued to capture images of many animals moving, trying to catch them airborne. Of another large animal, the hippo (which he did not photograph) Muybridge wrote:

Was he right? As a scientist whose research partly focuses on how giant land animals like rhinos, elephants, and giraffes move and how gravity uniquely constrains how athletic they can be on land, I've long wondered how hippos move on land.

Most people probably think of hippos in terms of their activities in the water, where they do spend much of their time. But they are amphibious animals that spend about one-third of their time on land. At giant sizes (typically around 1400 kg) similar to those of young elephants, hippos should be ponderous and slow on land, especially as they must also be adapted for life in the water and look so bulky. But what seems likely and what is true are not always the same. That's where the science comes in, to address questions with evidence. We know hippos don't fly; they have no wings and are too big; but what can they truly achieve under gravity's hefty pull?

In a recent study, we showed that hippos trot – but at fast speeds they can become airborne with all four feet off the ground at once. This is remarkable because now we know that hippos are one of the largest animals that still can get airborne at fast speeds and yet they are also adapted for a semi-aquatic lifestyle.

A simple experiment

Studying the existing literature about hippo locomotion, I found it wasn't clear what range of gaits or sequence of footfalls hippos used.

Some studies said they used a "lateral sequence" walking pattern – a "four-beat" gait, contacting the ground with left hind, then left fore, then right hind, then right fore feet.

Others stated that hippos only used a "trotting" pattern even at slower speeds. Here trotting doesn't mean moving at a moderate speed like a jog. In scientific analysis of locomotion, much as in other areas such as equestrian sport, a trot is a "two-beat" gait in which diagonal limbs move in near-unison, with left hind and right front feet contacting the ground, followed by right hind and left front feet about half of a footfall cycle ("stride") apart.

Few scientific studies had even considered what hippos do when they move quickly on land. There were some observations that, at least at moderate speeds, hippos trotted.

So I designed a very simple experiment, analogous to what Muybridge did but today a mundane activity: taking digital videos of hippos moving at a range of speeds.

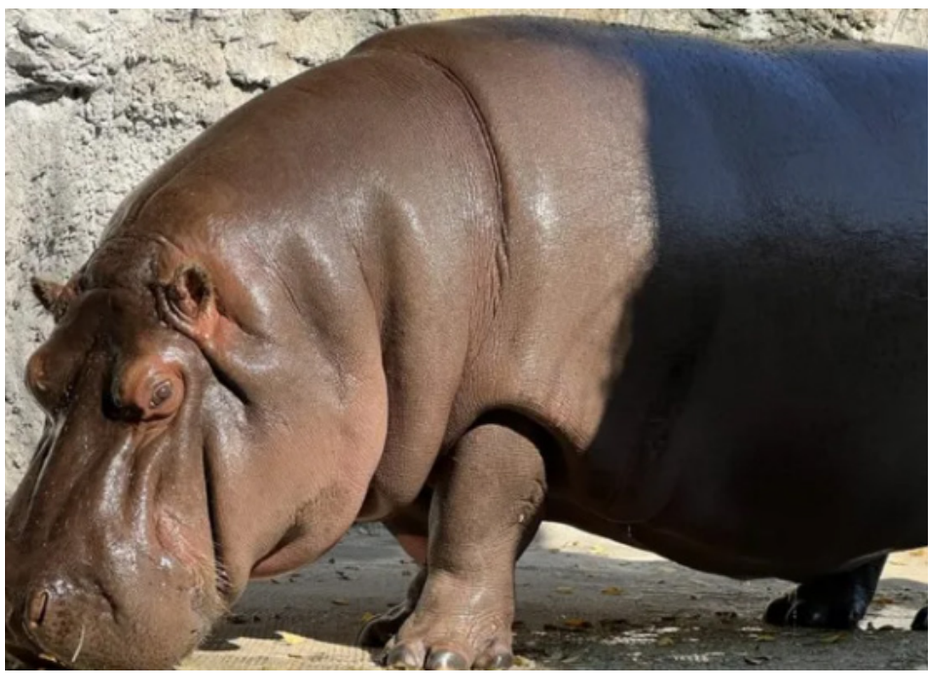
I sent my undergraduate veterinary student, Emily Pringle, to Flamingo Land Resort in North Yorkshire in the UK, armed with basic GoPro cameras, to capture videos of their two adult hippos. She noted during the two days of intermittent filming that the hippos were slow; just walking. It wasn't a surprise. Not only did the hippos not spend much time on land (and were out of sight in their barn at night), but there was no way to motivate them to move quickly – they live a safe life. There was a second part to our plan. The internet is full of videos of wildlife, so we searched Youtube and other websites for more videos of hippos moving at a range of speeds on land, to "bulk up" our data sample. This helped to put our video of the two zoo hippos into a broader context. We hoped to find some footage of hippos moving as quickly as they could, under more motivated (probably wild) conditions.

We collected 169 strides from 46 video clips of 32 hippos. Most of it was slow walking, but all of these walking strides involving trotting patterns. It's clear that hippos prefer to trot rather than using a four-beat lateral sequence pattern, even at slow speeds. The videos of wild African hippos, and a couple from zoos, contained the most exciting finding.

About 14 of our 46 hippo videos showed at least brief periods of "non-support", as Muybridge termed it – becoming airborne with all four feet off the ground.

The fastest sequences showed hippos getting airborne for around 0.3 seconds. That might seem really brief but it's longer than a single foot might be on the ground (as little as 0.2 seconds). Furthermore, the nervous system of a big animal like a hippo would involve lengthy delays in response to a stumble, so those airborne periods could be risky.

—Courtesy, The Conversation



Studies reveal hippos only used a 'trotting' pattern even at slower speeds

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Banning social media will help teens avoid mental health issues

Over recent months, a number of politicians have supported calls to ban social media for children under 16 in Australia. Currently, kids under 13 are not allowed to use social media.

There's some research that suggests social media can be helpful for certain young people by, for example, connecting them with like-minded peers.

That said, there is a raft of reasons for this proposed change.

The most compelling is evidence showing inappropriate screen time and social media use are linked to poor mental health in children and young people, including depression and anxiety.

Overuse or misuse of social media can damage many areas of psychological wellbeing. But, as an expert in adolescent development, I've been exploring one that's not often considered: identity development.

Identity development has long been regarded as the core psychological business of adolescence.

You decide who you are, what you want to become, what underlying values you stand for and what you want out of life as you move toward adulthood. But might social media risk thwarting this process?

Developing an identity

Between the ages of about 11 and 15, the human brain becomes increasingly sensitive to attention and feedback from peers. The parts of the brain responsible for developing perspective, judgment, critical thinking and self-control will not fully mature until a person's early to mid 20s.

Teenagers have always compared themselves to others. They seek validation from peers as they explore their values, develop their personalities and seek to express themselves.

But social media have provided a platform for adolescents – particularly those high in FOMO, or fear of missing out – to obsess over how they compare to many more people, including aptly named "influencers".

It can be difficult for a young person to develop a clear sense of self when they're constantly comparing themselves to and following others.

Similarly, young people are developing many of their opinions based on what they see on social media. An individual's tendency to conform to other people's opinions is sometimes called the "bandwagon effect".

While plenty of social media content can be harmless enough, social media – like the real world – are becoming increasingly political and polarised, with little tolerance for opposing ideas. Some teens may find themselves latching onto ideologies fed to them via marketing algorithms.

Young people are developing many of their opinions based on what they see on social media

PHOTO: PIXABAY

And we know young people can become radicalised through social media.

Living in the public sphere

Who are you? How do you see yourself? Are you the same person in public, in private, with friends, family or at work? Would you honestly admit some of your deepest feelings to your work colleague, friend, or even your partner? How about to yourself?

Harry Triandis, a psychology researcher who died in 2019, proposed differences between the "public" and "private" self that we all embody. Most people can relate to keeping their real opinions or values to themselves while in public or in an unknown group of people.

> In a 24/7 virtual world, there's less opportunity for today's teenager to critically think about what they are seeing online, self-reflect, explore and change their mind

Once we are confident that our manner of speaking and underlying value systems won't be misconstrued, we start to reveal ourselves bit by bit.

This process is the basis of forming friendships. And it's only in our most intimate relationships that we reveal ourselves fully.

Ask yourself, what embarrassing beliefs did you harbour across your lifespan, especially during your teenage years when your brain was still developing? Perhaps you held some stereotypes or biases that you now find embarrassing?

Your private self is the basis for quiet reflection, learning and changing your mind.

But nowadays we see teens playing out their entire lives in the public sphere – essentially skipping this step. Not only are they developing many of their opinions based on what they see on social media, but they often broadcast them online instantly. At a later time, they may be forced to defend these ideas.

In a 24/7 virtual world, there's less opportunity for today's teenager to critically think about what they are seeing online, self-reflect, explore and change their mind.

There is little room to make mistakes, test boundaries, explore ideas and analyse information to forge their own identity. These concerns are among the reasons many medical experts, parents and politicians alike want to limit access to social media for children.

While social media can continue to have detrimental effects for people older than 16, the earlier part of adolescence is an important time for the development of a young person's identity and self-worth. Research has shown identity disturbance in adolescence – essentially an unstable sense of self – is a strong precursor to personality disorders in adulthood. We don't yet completely understand what life on social media does to developing identity, but it's vital we continue to explore this area.

—Courtesy, The Conversation

PHOTO: PTI

Israeli strike kill 2 people in Southern Lebanon

JERUSALEM, 29 JULY

Israeli strikes killed two people and injured three others in Southern Lebanon early Monday, Lebanon's state-run news agency said. The report came as Israel mulls its response to a rocket attack from Lebanon over the weekend that killed 12 children and teenagers in a town in the Israel-controlled Golan Heights. Monday's strikes did not appear to be Israel's response to the deadly weekend attack but more routine fighting. Lebanese state media said a Monday morning strike hit a motorcycle travelling close to the Lebanon-Israel border, killing two riders and injuring a child. Also Monday, two were injured in a separate strike in southern Lebanon, Lebanese state media reported. Israeli military officials said only that the military had struck Hezbollah operatives and infrastructure but did not give more information. *—AP*

3 killed in Pakistan after protesters clash with forces

KARACHI, 29 JULY

At least three people have been killed and many others were injured when protesters clashed with security personnel in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province following a sit-in for the rights of Baloch people in Gwadar city, media reports said on Monday. The sit-in organised by the Balochistan Yakjehti Committee (BYC) began on Sunday even as scores of people, including 14 persons in Mastung, were injured in clashes with security personnel. The BYC is holding a demonstration for the rights of the people of Balochistan province and the safeguarding of its natural resources. Although the authorities set up roadblocks at several places leading to Gwadar, a large number of people still managed to gather at Marine Drive for the rally named the 'Baloch Rajee Muchi'. *—PTI*

PIA crew caught red-handed selling Saudi Riyals

LAHORE, 29 JULY

A female Pakistan International Airlines flight attendant, who was caught smuggling foreign currency at the international airport here in Punjab province, has been sent on judicial remand. Customs officials, who produced the suspect before a magistrate on Saturday, sought her custody after she was detained on Friday following the recovery of a large amount of Saudi riyals in her socks during a body search, Dawn News reported on Monday. A video of the cabin crew member taking out the currency notes has also gone viral on social media. An FIR was registered against the flight attendant on the complaint of Customs officials. *—PTI*

Nepal becomes net electricity exporter for 1st time in FY24

KATHMANDU, 29 JULY

For the first time, Nepal has become a net electricity exporter with the earnings from electricity export exceeding the spending on its import from India in the 2023-24 fiscal year, authorities here said on Monday. In 2021, India allowed Nepal to sell electricity in its market. At present, Nepal has been exporting 690 MW of electricity to the Indian market. The Himalayan nation has been exporting its surplus electricity to India in the peak production season starting from June to November. The country imports power from India during the dry season. "This way, the NEA made a gain of Rs 120 million from the transaction," NEA spokesperson Chandan Ghosh said. *—PTI*

Sexual violence is rampant in Sudan's civil war

CAIRO, 29 JULY

An international rights group on Monday accused a paramilitary group in war-torn Sudan of sexual violence against women, including rape, gang rape, and forced and child marriage. A smaller number of incidents were also attributed to the military, it said.

Human Rights Watch called for the United Nations and the African Union to establish a joint mission to protect civilians in Sudan as more than 15 months of fighting between the military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces has shown no signs of abating.

"The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have raped, gang raped, and forced into marriage countless women and girls in residential areas in Sudan's capital," said Laetitia Bader, deputy Africa director at Human Rights Watch.

The group also accused both warring parties of blocking survivors' access to critical emergency care, and said the military has "willfully restricted" shipments of humanitarian supplies to RSF-controlled areas, including medical supplies and aid workers since October last year.

Human Rights Watch called for the United Nations and the African Union to establish a joint mission to protect civilians *PHOTO: AGENZIA FIDES*

Sudan plunged into chaos in April last year when simmering tensions between the military and the RSF exploded into open fighting in the capital, Khartoum, and elsewhere in the country. The fighting has killed more than 14,000 people and wounded 33,000 others, according to the UN, but rights activists say the true toll could be much higher.

- The fighting has killed more than 14,000 people and wounded 33,000 others, according to the UN, but rights activists say the true toll could be much higher

The formerly military-aligned RSF grew out of the Janjaweed militias formed during the conflict in Darfur in the 2000s by former President Omar al-Bashir, who ruled the country for three decades until he was overthrown during a popular uprising in 2019.

These acts constitute "war crimes and crimes against humanity", it said.

It said an RSF spokesman denied occupying hospitals or medical centres in Khartoum and its sister cities, but didn't provide evidence that the group has carried out effective investigations into allegations of sexual violence by its forces. *—AP*

Maduro declared winner in Venezuela's Prez election

National Electoral Council said Maduro secured 51% of the vote

CARACAS, 29 JULY

Nicolas Maduro was declared the winner in Venezuela's presidential election Sunday, even as his opponents were preparing to dispute the results, setting up a high-stakes showdown that will determine whether the South American nation transitions away from one party rule.

Shortly after midnight, the National Electoral Council said Maduro secured 51 per cent of the vote, overcoming the main opposition candidate, Edmundo González, who garnered 44 per cent.

But the electoral authority, which is controlled by Maduro loyalists, didn't immediately release the tallies from each of the 30,000 polling booths nationwide, hampering the opposition's ability to challenge the results after claiming it had data for only 30 per cent of the ballot boxes.

Foreign leaders held off recognising the results as the electoral council promised to release official tallies in the "coming hours." "The Maduro regime should understand that the results it published are difficult to believe," said Gabriel Boric, the leftist leader of Chile. "We won't recognize any result that is not verifiable." US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the US has "serious concerns that the result announced does not reflect the will or the votes of the Venezuelan people," speaking in Tokyo. The delay in announcing results — six hours after polls were supposed to close — indicated a deep debate inside the government about how to proceed after Maduro's opponents came out early in the evening all but claiming victory.

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, right, gestures during a meeting with international observers in Caracas, Venezuela *PHOTO: PTI*

When Maduro finally came out to celebrate the results, he accused unidentified foreign enemies for trying to hack the voting system.

Opposition representatives said tallies they collected from campaign representatives at the polling stations showed Gonzalez trouncing Maduro. Meanwhile, the head of the electoral council said it would release the official voting acts in the coming hours.

Maduro celebrated the result with a few hundreds supporters at the presidential palace. Earlier, Opposition leaders celebrating, online and outside a few voting centers, what they assured were a landslide victory for González.

The election will have ripple effects throughout the Americas, with government opponents and supporters alike signaling their interest in joining the exodus of 7.7 million Venezuelans who have already left their homes for opportunities abroad should Maduro win another six year term. *—AP*

Pak seeks reprofiling of over $27B debt with friendly nations

ISLAMABAD, 29 JULY

Cash-strapped Pakistan has sought the re-profiling of more than USD 27 billion in debt and liabilities with China and two other friendly nations to secure a bailout package from the IMF, according to a media report on Monday.

Washington-based International Monetary Fund last month announced that it signed a staff-level agreement with Pakistan to provide a USD 7 billion loan which would be disbursed for 37 months. However, it attached stringent conditions with it, requiring Pakistan prior action before the fund's board accords final approval for the loan. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb after returning from Beijing told the media on Sunday that talks have been going on with China, Saudi Arabia and the UAE for a re-profiling of USD 27 billion.

Muhammad Aurangzeb *PHOTO: X/@PECONOMIST_*

- Pakistan has now requested the maturity period of these loans — USD 5 billion from China, USD 4 billion from Saudi Arabia, and USD 3 billion from the UAE — to be extended to at least three years, offering greater predictability under IMF plan

Aurangzeb said Pakistan had already asked the friendly bilateral trio of lenders to roll over its more than USD 12 billion annual debt portfolio. Pakistan has a peculiar financial arrangement with these three countries in the shape of commercial loans and SAFE deposits.

Pakistan has now requested the maturity period of these loans — USD 5 billion from China, USD 4 billion from Saudi Arabia, and USD 3 billion from the UAE — to be extended to at least three years, offering greater predictability under IMF programme. *—PTI*

Pak extends remand of Imran's close aide by 2 days

ISLAMABAD, 29 JULY

A Pakistani court has extended the physical remand of a close aide of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party for two more days and sent a female social media activist, allegedly linked to the political organisation, to judicial remand. Federal Investigation Agency presented Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's Central Information Secretary Raoof Hasan before District and Sessions Judge Murid Abbas on Sunday after the expiry of his three-day remand granted last week. FIA prosecutor informed the judge that the case record, including transcripts of videos, has been submitted to court. The analysis of the videos has to be carried out, it sought eight days' physical remand. *—PTI*

SRI LANKA'S MINISTER RESIGNS TO CONTEST PREZ ELECTION

COLOMBO, 29 JULY

Sri Lanka's Justice Minister Wijeyedasa Rajapakshe on Monday said that he has resigned from his position to contest the presidential election on 21 September.

Rajapakshe, 65, became the second member of the cabinet to declare himself a candidate after President Ranil Wickremesinghe announced his intention to contest the election last Friday. "I have resigned from my ministry to contest the election. I will be doing so under a new front which will be announced soon," he said.

"Upon myself and the President announcing our intentions to contest the elections, issues arose. The main issue was two people from the Cabinet of Ministers contesting for the presidency, even though we were contesting from two different parties. The President sought my opinion on this and I have decided to step down from my ministerial portfolios to contest for the Presidential Election," he told the media. *—PTI*

Wijeyedasa Rajapakshe *PHOTO: X/@THEISLAND_LK*

Negotiating teams to restart India FTA talks, says UK

LONDON, 29 JULY

The process of getting negotiating teams back in the room will kick-start soon to deliver a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India, the UK's newly elected Labour government announced on Monday as it set out its trading priorities.

Business and Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds spelt out his department's approach to international trade deals, which he said will put economic growth at the heart of the negotiations to achieve high-quality pacts that give British businesses access to international markets and boost jobs.

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) said it also plans to publish a trade strategy which aligns with the government's industrial strategy, enhances economic security and supports net zero ambitions.

"Boosting trade abroad is essential to deliver a strong economy at home. That's why I've wasted no time taking stock of progress and getting ready to press on with trade talks with our international partners," said Reynolds.

"Our teams will be entering negotiating rooms as soon as possible, laser-focused on creating new opportunities for UK firms so they can support jobs across the country and deliver the growth we desperately need," he said.

India and the UK began negotiating an FTA in January 2022 under the then Conservative Party government and 13 rounds of negotiations have been completed since then to enhance the GBP 38.1 billion a year bilateral partnership. *—PTI*

RAISING CONCERN

AI video shared by Musk mimics Harris' voice

NEW YORK, 29 JULY

A manipulated video that mimics the voice of Vice President Kamala Harris saying things she did not say is raising concerns about the power of artificial intelligence to mislead with Election Day about three months away.

The video gained attention after tech billionaire Elon Musk shared it on X evening without explicitly noting it was originally released as parody. The video also raises questions about how to best handle content that blurs the lines of what is considered an appropriate use of AI, particularly if it falls into the category of satire.

The video uses many of the same visuals as a real ad that Harris, the likely Democratic president nominee, released last week launching her campaign. But the video swaps out the voice-over audio with another voice that convincingly impersonates Harris.

"I, Kamala Harris, am your Democrat candidate for President because Joe Biden finally exposed his senility at the debate," the voice says in the video. It claims Harris is a "diversity hire" because she is a woman and a person of colour, and it says she doesn't know "the first thing about running the country." The video retains "Harris for President" branding. It also adds in some authentic past clips of Harris.

Harris is a symbol of hope and representation for more than 4.4 million Indian-Americans in the US, a Democratic fundraiser has said, asserting that her presidential campaign's "organic, grassroots enthusiasm" is producing results. *—AP*

Kamala Harris *PHOTO: X/@VP*

Salman Rushdie endorses Harris' candidacy

Mumbai-born author Salman Rushdie has endorsed Kamala Harris' candidacy for the US presidency and said he believes she is the person who can prevent former president Donald Trump from dragging the country towards authoritarianism. Rushdie extended his endorsement of Harris during a virtual event. *—PTI*

7 people shot, 1 fatally, at a park in New York

ROCHESTER, 29 JULY

One person is dead and at least six others were injured following a mass shooting Sunday at a park in upstate New York.

Rochester police said they responded to Maplewood Park around 6:20 p.m. to a large gathering with shots fired and found several people suffering from gunshot wounds.

An adult in their 20s was killed, another person suffered a life threatening injury and five people were hospitalised with minor injuries, Capt. Greg Bello said. The identity of the victim fatally shot has not yet been released pending the notification of family, Bello said.

Several police agencies responded to the park including the Irondequoit Police, Monroe County Sheriff's Office, Rochester Police and New York State Police. Rochester police did confirm a party was happening in the area at the time of the shooting.

"At this point we don't know how many people were shooting," Bello said. "We are trying to work our way through as many witnesses as we can." No suspects were in custody, police said. *—AP*

NATIONWIDE MOURNING

150 killed in student unrest: B'desh govt

DHAKA, 29 JULY

For the first time, the Bangladesh government on Monday officially acknowledged that 150 people were killed across the country during the students' unrest over the quota system.

Violence gripped Bangladesh recently and the government called in the army to quell protests against job quotas. The protests, which started in universities and colleges earlier this month, quickly turned into a more widespread agitation against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her government. The unrest has left several thousand people, including policemen, wounded and major government installations damaged.

"The government has decided that a nationwide mourning will be observed tomorrow... People have been urged to wear black badges to mourn the deaths (during the violence)," Cabinet Secretary Mahbub Hossain told a media briefing after a meeting chaired by Hasina at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). He said mosques, temples, pagodas and churches across the country were also urged to offer prayers for the departed souls and the wounded people.

The unrest has left several thousand people, including policemen, wounded and major government installations damaged *PHOTO: PTI*

- Mahbub Hossain said mosques, temples, pagodas and churches across the country were also urged to offer prayers for the departed souls and the wounded people

The top bureaucrat said Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal presented a report at the meeting about the overall situation and confirmed 150 deaths in clashes across the country. The announcement came on a day when the military and paramilitary troops patrolled the streets of the capital Dhaka while police in riot gear enforced a strict vigil as a faction of the protesting students overnight called a new round of protests. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Gold tumbles ₹950; silver nosedives ₹4,500

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

Gold prices tumbled by Rs 950 to Rs 71,050 per 10 grams in the local market here on Monday due to weak demand from jewellers. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity closed at Rs 72,000 per 10 grams in the previous session on Saturday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also plunged Rs 1,650 to Rs 70,700 per 10 grams. On Saturday, it closed at Rs 72,350 per 10 grams. Silver also declined Rs 4,500 to Rs 84,500 per kg on decreased offtake by coin makers and industrial units. This marks the biggest single-day fall in silver prices in 2024. It ended at Rs 89,000 per kg in the previous session. However, on the global front, Comex gold is trading at USD 2,438.50 per ounce, up by USD 10.60 per ounce. —*PTI*

Rupee settles flat at 83.73 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 29 JULY

The rupee moved in a narrow range before settling flat at 83.73 (provisional) against US dollar on Monday as a firm American currency in overseas markets offset the gains from weak crude oil prices. Forex traders said a recovery in the US dollar and dollar demand from importers restricted gains for the domestic unit. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.70 and touched a low of 83.74 against the dollar during the trading session. It finally settled at 83.73 (provisional) against the American currency, . On Friday, the rupee recovered from its all-time low level and appreciated 5 paise to 83.73 against the US dollar. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback was at 104.48, higher by 0.16 per cent. —*PTI*

BluPine Energy secures ₹239 cr funding from Tata

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

BluPine Energy on Monday said it has secured Rs 239 crore financial assistance from Tata Capital. The amount will be utilised towards a solar power project in Chhattisgarh, the company said in a statement. The 75 megawatt project is expected to generate nearly 117 million units (MUs) of energy annually and offset more than 107,000 tonne of Co2 emissions, it said. BluPine Energy is a leading renewable energy services company established in India by Actis, a global investor and world leader in funding and building sustainable infrastructure companies. Tata Capital Ltd (TCL) is the flagship financial services company of Tata Group. —*PTI*

India & Saudi hold 1st meeting on investments

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

India and Saudi Arabia virtually held the first meeting of the 'India-Saudi Arabia High Level Task Force' on investments. Constructive discussions were held on various opportunities for bilateral investments in diverse areas in the public and private sectors, including refining and petrochemical plants, new and renewable energy, power, telecom, and innovation, among others, according to a statement by the Prime Minister's Office on Sunday. he two sides reviewed the discussions held between the technical teams of the Task Force, and also had a detailed review of the measures aimed at promoting two-way investments in a mutually beneficial manner, the statement said. The two sides agreed to regular consultations between technical teams to take forward the discussions on specific investments. —*ANI*

Market settles flat after hitting all-time high levels

Sensex ended at all-time closing high of 81,355.84

MUMBAI, 29 JULY

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty hit intra-day record high levels before closing almost flat on Monday due to profit-taking in FMCG and IT shares by cautious investors ahead of the key US Fed interest rate decision this week.

The 30-share BSE Sensex closed higher by 23.12 points or 0.03 per cent at 81,355.84 -- its all time closing high -- with 16 of its components advancing and 14 ending lower. The index opened higher and jumped 575.71 points or 0.70 per cent to hit a new intra-day record peak of 81,908.43 in late morning deals following a decline in US bond yields.

However, investors preferred to book profits at record high levels amid high volatility dragging the index down.

From the Sensex pack, Larsen & Toubro, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, State Bank of India, IndusInd Bank, Reliance Industries and Sun Pharma were among the biggest gainers. Bharti Airtel, Titan, ITC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Mahindra and HDFC were among laggards. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Adani Wilmar & Adani Total Gas posts profit on higher income in FY25

Edible oil major Adani Wilmar on Monday reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 313.20 crore for the first quarter of this fiscal on higher income. The company had posted a net loss of Rs 78.92 crore in the year-ago period. Meanwhile, Adani Total Gas Ltd, the city gas joint venture between Adani group and TotalEnergies of France, on Monday reported a 20 per cent rise in June quarter net profit, on the back of rise in CNG and piped cooking gas sales. —*PTI*

BANDHAN & ICICI BANKS SHARES RALLY PROFITS

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

Shares of Bandhan Bank surged over 13 per cent in morning trade on Monday after the private sector firm posted a 47 per cent jump in its net profit to Rs 1,063 crore for the June 2024 quarter due to a decline in bad loans.

The stock soared 11.97 per cent to Rs 215.50 on the BSE.

At the NSE, it jumped 13.35 per cent to Rs 218.20.

The lender had earned a net profit of Rs 721 crore in the year-ago period.

Meanwhile, shares of ICICI Bank climbed nearly 3 per cent on Monday morning trade after the company posted a nearly 10 per cent increase in consolidated net profit for the June quarter.

The stock went up 2.67 per cent to Rs 1,239.95 on the BSE.

At the NSE, it climbed 2.74 per cent to Rs 1,240.35. —*PTI*

BANKRUPTY ORDER

NCLAT judge recuses from hearing Byju's plea

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

Byju's Founder Byju Raveendran's plea against the Insolvency of Think & Learn before the NCLAT was adjourned on Monday as one of the members of the bench recused from the hearing.

The matter will be placed before a bench headed by National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) Chairman Justice Ashok Bhushan, who will assign a different bench to hear the matter.

Raveendran had filed a petition challenging the initiation of insolvency proceedings against Think & Learn, which runs edtech company Byju's.

The matter was listed on Monday before a two-member Chennai-based bench of the NCLAT comprising Justice Sharad Kumar Sharma, Member (Judicial), and Jatindranath Swain, Member (Technical).

However, Justice Sharma recused himself from the hearing, saying he had appeared as the counsel for the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) before his elevation.

BYJU'S

- Raveendran had filed a petition challenging the initiation of insolvency proceedings against Think & Learn, which runs edtech company Byju's

The Bengaluru bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on July 16 directed Corporate Insolvency Resolution Proceedings (CIRP), admitting the plea filed by the BCCI.

The BCCI had approached the NCLT under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) over a default of Rs 158.9 crore by Think & Learn -- once India's most valuable startup worth an estimated USD 22 billion.

The high court had on 26 July deferred Raveendran's plea to 30 July. —*PTI*

ICL to remain listed entity, says UltraTech

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

India Cement Ltd (ICL) would remain a listed entity as the acquirer, UltraTech, has no "intention to delist" the South-based rival cement company, the Aditya Birla group firm said in a regulatory filing.

The ownership of the Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket team Chennai Super Kings (CSK), controlled by India Cements promoters N Srinivasan and his family, will remain unchanged.

Axis Capital, managing the open offer for UltraTech, in a copy of a public announcement, submitted to exchanges on Monday said, the leading cement player intends to acquire 8.05 crore shares of ICL, which is 26 per cent of the shareholding of the Chennai-based cement manufacturer.

"The acquirer does not have an intention to delist the target company (ICL) pursuant to this open offer," it said.

UltraTech CEMENT The Engineer's Choice

PHOTO: www.ultratechcement.com

The open offer is "at a price of Rs 390 per offer share aggregating to a total consideration of up to Rs 3,142.35 crore", which will be subject to the receipt of the required statutory approval from fair trade regulator CCI.

On Sunday, Aditya Birla Group flagship company UltraTech Cement announced to acquire a 32.72 per cent stake in India Cements from promoters and their associates for Rs 3,954 crore, which will allow it to expand its footprint in the highly competitive and fast-growing Southern cement market, particularly Tamil Nadu. —*PTI*

L&T bags new projects in India, abroad

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

Infrastructure major Larsen and Toubro (L&T) on Monday said it has bagged new projects in the country and abroad for setting up substations and transmission lines.

The large orders have been bagged by the power transmission and distribution 9(PT&D) vertical of Larsen & Toubro, the company said in a filing to the BSE.

In India, the company has bagged orders to execute two double circuit transmission line packages that are associated with evacuation of power from Jaisalmer/Barmer Renewable Energy Zone in Rajasthan to substations in Madhya Pradesh for further interconnections.

In the United Arab Emirates, the company bagged projects to construct a substation and three substations, it added.

Larsen & Toubro is a USD 27-billion Indian multinational engaged in engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) projects, hi-tech manufacturing and services, operating across multiple geographies. —*PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

'90% dues of UP sugarcane farmers cleared'

LUCKNOW, 29 JULY

About 90 per cent of the outstanding sugarcane dues of farmers in UP has been cleared, Sugarcane Development Minister Laxmi Narayan Chaudhary said on Monday. He was replying to a question raised by SP member Ashutosh Singh in the state legislative council. Chaudhary said that according to the current status of sugarcane price payment, the government has purchased sugarcane worth Rs 35,909 crore, out of which Rs 32,357 crore, that is 90.11 per cent of the outstanding dues, has been paid. As soon as the next sugarcane crushing season begins, the remaining dues will be cleared. Chaudhary claimed that Uttar Pradesh ranks first in sugarcane production in the country. BJP government has also paid Rs 11,000 crore of sugarcane price due during the previous SP government. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

FAKE ITC CLAIMS DETECTION BY GST OFFICERS UP 51%

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

Fake input tax credit (ITC) claims detection by central GST officers increased 51 per cent to Rs 36,374 crore in 2023-24, Parliament was informed on Monday.

Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary shared details of the fake input tax Credit (ITC) cases booked by Central Tax formations during the 2022-23 and 2023-24 fiscals in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

During 2023-24, 9,190 cases were booked by the central GST officers, involving fake ITC of Rs 36,374 crore. 182 persons were arrested and voluntary deposits of Rs 3,413 crore were made in the cases.

During 2022-23, Rs 24,140 crore fake ITC were detected in 7,231 cases. 152 persons were arrested and Rs 2,484 crore taxes were deposited voluntarily.

Chaudhary said the challenges in tracking fake ITC fraudsters relate to masterminds, who operate the fake ITC generation through control and management of a complex web of entities created across jurisdictions. "Such challenges are being met through coordination with multiple stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies," he added.

The Number of cases booked by central tax formation during 2021-22 was 5,966. —*PTI*

India's power generation rose to 4.46 GW in 10 years

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

India's total installed power generation capacity has grown around 80 per cent over the last 10 years to 4,46,190 MW (4.46 GW) in June 2024, Parliament was informed on Monday.

The installed capacity, which was 2,48,554 MW in March 2014, reached 4,46,190 MW in June, the Union Minister of State for Power Shripad Naik said.

In a reply to the Rajya Sabha, he said the installed capacity of coal-based power has increased from 1,39,663 MW in March 2014 to 2,10,969 MW in June 2024.

While the installed capacity of renewable sector has increased from 75,519 MW in March 2014 to 1,95,013 MW in June 2024, the minister added.

The Government of India proposes to set up an additional minimum 80 GW coal-based capacity by 2031-32.

Besides, 2,927 new substations have been added, upgrade of 3,965 existing sub stations has been carried out and 8.5 lakh ckms of high tension and low tension lines have been added/upgraded, the MoS said. —*PTI*

Australia set to power India's clean energy transition

NEW DELHI, 29 JULY

Australia is pulling out all the stops to address India's critical minerals needs, in the shadow of China's dominance in the sector.

Australia and India have long maintained a friendly rivalry on the cricket pitch.

But now both countries have begun playing on an altogether different pitch — below the Earth's surface and the seabed — in their respective bids to scour for the critical minerals needed in the world's transition to sources of energy.

As recently as 1 July, the two countries signed an interim free trade agreement — to be given shape as a comprehensive pact at a subsequent date — aimed at deepening cooperation in critical minerals and their processing.

- India-Australia partnership on critical minerals reflects the two countries' strategic autonomy and resilience and is poised to further expand and deepen

While India seeks to tap into Australia's huge lithium and cobalt deposits, Australian government officials are prepared to go the extra mile to make their friend's access to critical minerals easier.

Indeed, the Australian government has promised to "facilitate" Indian companies' access to resources, partnerships and investments.

India-Australia partnership does not overtly confront China, but it seeks to address the geopolitical reality of supply chain vulnerabilities and the need for diversified, secure sources of minerals.

India-Australia partnership on critical minerals reflects the two countries' strategic autonomy and resilience and is poised to further expand and deepen. —*PTI*

RBI REPORT

Digital economy poised to form 1/5th of GDP

MUMBAI, 29 JULY

India's digital economy is poised to constitute a fifth of GDP by 2026 from one-tenth at present, according to a Reserve Bank report released on Monday.

In the foreword of 'Report on Currency and Finance (RCF) for the year 2023-24', Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das emphasised that digitalisation in finance is paving the way for next-generation banking and improving access to financial services at affordable cost.

The country has embraced not just financial technology (FinTech) by speeding up digital payments but has also celebrated India Stack comprising biometric identification, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), mobile connectivity, digital lockers and consent-based data sharing.

RBI Governor also said flagship UPI has revolutionised the retail payment experience for end-users PHOTO: PTI

The digital revolution is galvanising banking infrastructure and public finance management systems covering both direct benefit transfers and tax collections.

Vibrant e-markets are springing up and expanding their reach.

India's cost per gigabyte (GB) of data consumed is the lowest globally at an average of Rs 13.32 (USD 0.16) per GB. India also has one of the highest mobile data consumption in the world, with an average per-user per-month consumption of 24.1 GB in 2023.

In the foreword of the report, the RBI Governor also said the flagship UPI has revolutionised the retail payment experience for end-users, making faster and more convenient.

Digitalisation can impact inflation and output dynamics, and monetary policy transmission in diverse manners and the overall impact could vary over time given the fast pace of developments, the report noted. —*PTI*

Report flags employer, employee trust mismatch

MUMBAI, 29 JULY

Around 34 per cent of organisations in the country struggle to find the right talent and one in three grapples with retaining existing employees as the gap between employer expectations and employee realities regarding hiring and retention continues to grow, according to a report.

Even as employers and job seekers agree that flexibility, higher salaries and career progression are top priorities, employees value company culture and ethics more than the organisations realise while organisations overvalue the importance of brand and incentives, said Michael Page 'Talent Trends 2024 - India Expectation Gap' report.

Michael Page 'Talent Trends 2024 - India Expectation Gap' report is based on interviews among 3,087 respondents across India.

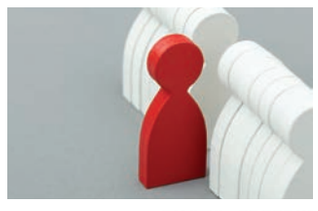


PHOTO: FREEPIK

Meanwhile, the report found that most employees are open to new careers and job roles in 2024 compared to last year and 94 per cent of respondents were open to exploring different roles this year, according to the report.

When it came to workplace discrimination, the report found that in India 47 per cent of employees report workplace discrimination, which is higher than the Asia Pacific average of 31 per cent.

—*PTI*

HARMANPREET IS THE SAVIOUR AGAIN FOR INDIA

India escape with 1-1 draw vs Argentina at Paris

PARIS, 29 JULY

Skipper Harmanpreet Singh rescued India by converting a last-minute penalty corner as they held former champions Argentina to a 1-1 draw in a Pool B hockey match of the Paris Olympics here Monday.

India had fluffed as many as nine penalty corners before Harmanpreet found the net, firing the ball into the top corner. Argentina were left to rue the missed penalty stroke by Maico Casella in the 36th minute.

It was Lucas Martinez, who had put his side ahead in the 22nd minute with a field goal and Harmanpreet, who had struck against New Zealand in the dying moments, found the net a minute before the final hooter.

Harmanpreet did not feel that India fared poorly. "To be honest, we created a lot of chances. There were lots of open slots and counter balls. Finishing is where we need to do better. Even in 50-50 balls we have to give 100 percent and in 100 per cent ball, we need to convert with effort. We will keep that in mind going forward," Harmanpreet told PTI.

Indian hockey players celebrate after scoring a goal against Argentian on Mondayin France **PHOTO: PTI**

The India captain was all praise for the Argentina defence. "That is something we can learn, it was a good lesson from this game. They also play overhead and we do the same."

Coming into the match after losing to Australia, the Rio Olympic champions were desperate for a win but had to be content with a draw despite dominating the proceedings for the better part of the match. Argentina enjoyed possession as India struggled to penetrate the rival circle throughout.

—PTI

COUNTRIES				
1. S Korea	5	3	1	9
2. Japan	5	2	4	11
3. China	5	2	2	9
4. France	4	7	3	14
25. India	0	0	1	1

ARJUN BABUTA NARROWLY MISSES MEDAL

CHATEAUROUX, 29 JULY

Indian shooter Arjun Babuta buckled under pressure and finished fourth in the men's 10m air rifle competition after coming close to winning a medal in his maiden Olympics here on Monday.

Babuta shot a total of 208.4. A 9.5 in response to Croatia's Miran Maricic's 10.7 put paid to his hopes of finishing on the podium. The 25-year-old Babuta started the final with a 10.7 and followed that with a 10.2.

Shooter Ramita Jindal ended seventh in the final of the 10m air rifle women's competition at the Olympic Games here on Monday. Ramita, 20, shot 145.3 in a high-quality eight-women final.

The other Indian pair of Rhythm Sangwan and Arjun Singh Cheema finished 10th with a score of 576 and failed to make it to the medal rounds.

Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto were staring at an early exit after suffering their second consecutive group stage defeat in the women's doubles badminton competition at the Paris Olympic here on Monday. The Indians went down 11-21 12-21 to the world number four Japanese duo of Nami Matsuyama and Chiharu Shida in the 48-minute Group C match.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty's men's doubles Group C clash has been cancelled following the withdrawal of German player Mark Lamsfuss due to injury.

The Indian men's archery team, comprising the likes of stalwart Tarundeep Rai, Dhiraj Bommadevara and Pravin Jadhav, came up short against a fired up young Turkish team.

Prithviraj Tondaiman had a rough outing in his Olympic debut, finishing dead last in Day 1 of the Men's Trap event on Monday.

Djokovic beats Nadal to keep Olympic dream going

Novak Djokovic outclassed his long-time rival Rafael Nadal to win their Olympic second-round match and continue his bid to land an elusive gold medal.

In a separate incident, a record number of 191 athletes openly identifying as LGBTQ+ are competing. *—BBC News/AP/PTI*

Commentator axed over sexist remark

A veteran sports commentator has been sacked from his Olympics role after making a sexist remark about Australian female swimmers following their gold medal win.

As the 4x100m freestyle relay team were making their way off the pool deck in Paris, Bob Ballard said they were "finishing up", adding "you know what women are like... hanging around, doing their make up". The clip quickly went viral and broadcaster Eurosport later said he had been removed from the commentary line-up.

—BBC News

I have played my last match in India jersey, says Bopanna

PARIS, 29 JULY

India's tennis campaign at the Paris Olympics lasted just one day as Sumit Nagal and the men's doubles pair of Rohan Bopanna and N Sriram Balaji bowed out after losing their respective opening matches to French challengers, here Sunday.

However, it was not a perfect way to end his India career but Bopanna would take the early exit from the Paris Olympics on the chin, content that he could live his dream for 22 years.

Bopanna came close to break the jinx in 2016 but finished fourth with Sania Mirza in the mixed event.

An ardent supporter of cricket's inclusion in the Olympics, former India head coach and batting legend Rahul Dravid says the "serious dressing room conversations" that he has heard indicate that players are going to "fight tooth and nail" to be there at the world's biggest sporting event. *—PTI*

Day 3 witnesses some historic medal seals

PARIS, 29 JULY

Golden days at Paris Olympics 2024 on day 3 as divers, mountain biking and shooting sees some historic medals and performances.

In men's mountain biking, Pidcock raced away to win a historic gold medal in a dramatic fashion way. Wearing the number one on his jersey, started the race as favourite for gold and was leading the way - until a puncture disrupted his plans.

In Men's Synchronised 3m platform, Lian Junjie and Yang Hao from China bagged the Gold medal. After taking a two-year break from diving Tom Daley won the silver medal in Men's 10m Synchronised platform.

In women's 10m air rifle Ban Hyo-jin from South Korea clinched the Gold medal and in Men's 10m air rifle, Sheng Lihao from China won the Gold medal. Adam Peaty has tested positive for Covid-19 a day after winning silver for Team GB. *—BBC News/AP*

Pidcock, Sheng Lihao, Ban Hyo-jin, Lian Junjie and Yang Hao **PHOTOS: PTI/X**

NEERAJ GETS A SPECIAL FAN

Fayis Asraf Ali, a Kerala cyclist, who has travelled all the way from Calicut, riding more than 22,000 kilometres to support his icon Neeraj Chopra. Ali's arrival in the French capital was the culmination of a long journey on his bicycle that took him across 30 countries, beginning on 15 August, 2022 **PHOTO: PTI**

TODAYS MATCH

SHOOTING | 12.30 PM

TRAP WOMEN, QUALIFICATION DAY 1

Rajeshwari Kumari, 32, Delhi

Shreyasi Singh, 32, Delhi

EQUESTRIAN | 2.30 PM

DRESSAGE INDIVIDUAL, GRAND PRIX DAY 1

Anush Agarwalla, 24, Kolkata

Agarwalla won the individual dressage bronze medal in equestrian at the Asian Games 2023 in Hangzhou.

HOCKEY | 4.45 PM

MEN'S, GROUP B

India Vs Ireland

ARCHERY | 5.14 PM

WOMEN'S INDIVIDUAL, 1/32 ELIMINATION ROUND

Ankita Bhakat

Bhakat ended as the top-seeded Indian in the women's archery rankings series on Thursday in Paris as she finished with a season-best 666 points in 11th place.

WOMEN'S INDIVIDUAL, 1/32 ELIMINATION ROUND | TIME: 5.27 PM

Bhajan Kaur, 18, Haryana

MEN'S INDIVIDUAL, 1/32 ELIMINATION ROUND | 10.46 PM

Dhiraj Bommadevara

BOXING | 7.16 PM

MEN'S 51KG, PRELIMINARIES ROUND OF 16

Amit Panghal, 28, Haryana

Panghal had won the gold medal at the 2018 Asian Games.

WOMEN'S 57KG, PRELIMINARIES ROUND OF 32 | 9.24 PM

Jaismine Lamboria, 22, Haryana

Lamboria secured the bronze at the 2022 Commonwealth Games. The Indian Army recruited Lamboriya as a havildar in the Corps of Military Police.

A JOURNEY TO REMEMBER

Coughlin clinches CPKC Women's Open in her 1st LPGA Tour

Lauren Coughlin takes a selfie after winning the Title **PHOTO: X@LPGA**

CALGARY, 29 JULY

Lauren Coughlin won the CPKC Women's Open on Sunday for her first LPGA Tour title, pulling away from Haeran Ryu with a two-stroke swing on the par-3 17th.

Tied for the lead after Ryu three-putted for bogey on the par-4 16th, Coughlin hit a 6-iron to 8 feet and birdied the 195-yard 17th. Ryu then missed a 3-foot par try to fall two shots back.

"It was kind of a tweener of a club," Coughlin said. "I could really only hit 6 and I needed to take some off it or else it might have gone over, especially considering how jacked up I was at the time.

"But I hit it pretty perfect and, the putt, I thought it was almost going to stay out to the left there and just dove right at the last second. It was huge."

She finished at 13-under 275, closing with a 1-under 71 for a two-stroke victory over Mao Saigo in mostly calm conditions at Earl Grey Golf Club, with smoke from wildfires again leaving a haze over the course.

Saigo shot 69 a day after breaking the tournament record with a 61 on the tree-lined course with thick rough and small greens.

"Being in contention this week was great experience for me," said Saigo, the 22-year-old Japanese player who is an LPGA Tour rookie after winning six times on the JLPGA.

Ryu also bogeyed the 18th in a 75 that left her tied for third with Jenny Shin (67) at 10 under. The leader after each of the first two rounds, Coughlin began the day a shot behind Ryu. Coughlin birdied the par-3 fifth, bogeyed the par-4 sixth and 10th and birdied the par-5 15th. *—AP*

Jiya makes another record by crossing English Channel

MUMBAI, 29 JULY

Jiya Rai, a 16-year-old from Mumbai with Autism Spectrum Disorder, has become the world's youngest and fastest para swimmer to cross the English Channel, a feat which she accomplished on July 28-29.

Jiya swam the English Channel from the Abbot's Cliff in England to Pointe de la Courte-Dune in France in a time of 17 hours and 25 minutes between July 28 and 29, covering a distance of 34 kilometres. She is the daughter of Madan Rai, the MC-at-Arms serving in Mumbai. The Western Naval Command (WNC) congratulated the young para swimmer on her feat. "All personnel of WNC convey their heartiest congratulations to Jiya Rai for becoming the world's youngest and fastest female para swimmer to successfully swim solo across the English Channel," the Western Naval Command wrote on X. *—PTI*

Ro-Ko among others to be trained ahead of ODIs

COLOMBO, 29 JULY

India skipper Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and a few other players will start their from Monday ahead of the three-match ODI series against Sri Lanka starting 2 August. Rohit, Kohli and a few others like rookie Harshit Rana will train in Colombo after reaching the island nation's capital on Sunday. Rohit, Kohli and Kuldeep Yadav will hit the ground running nearly a month after they helped India win the T20 World Cup in the Americas for the second time. These players will train under India assistant coach Abhishek Nayar in Colombo. Each of the three ODIs will be played at the R Premadasa Stadium here on 2, 4 and 7 August respectively.

—PTI

Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli **PHOTO: PTI**